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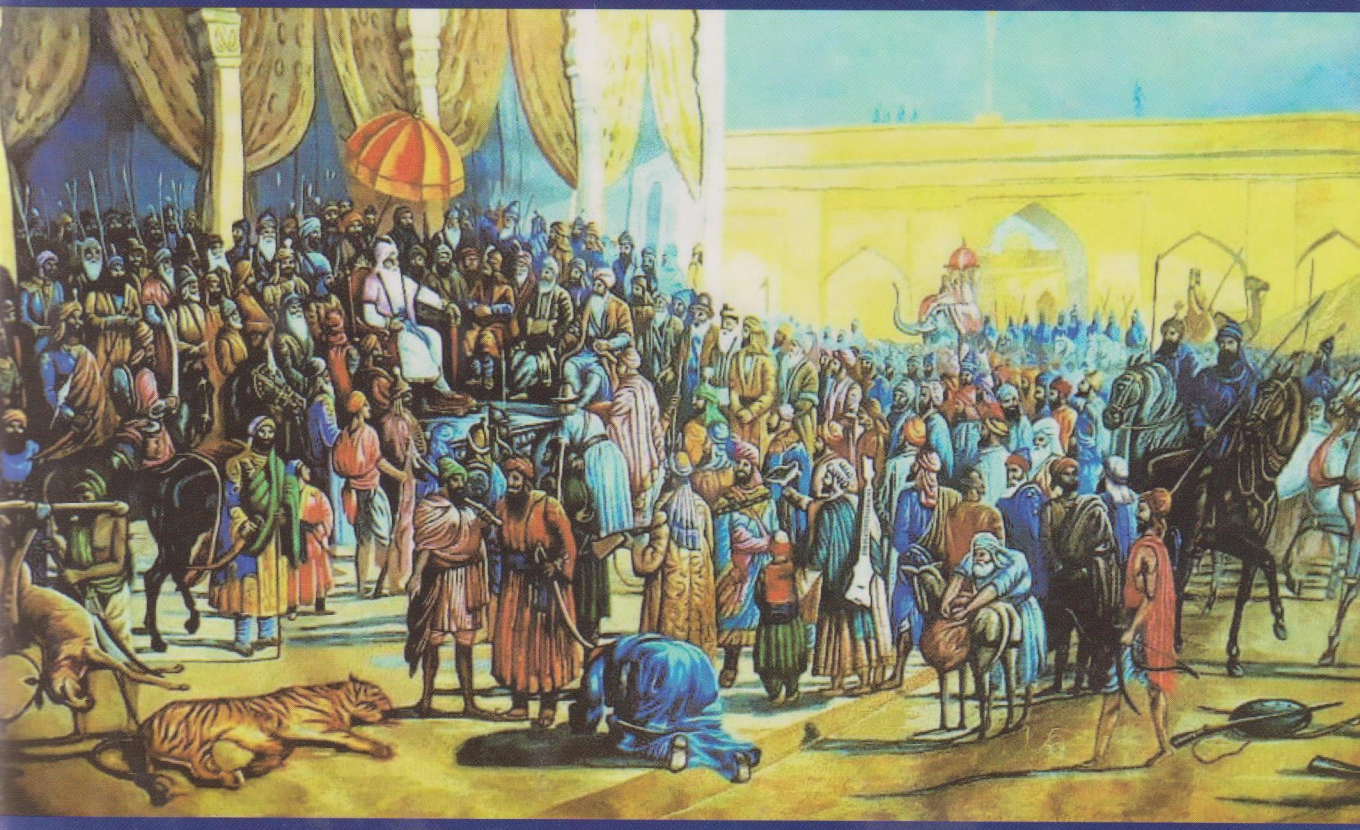

Volume III
Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his Successors
(1799-1849 CE)

edited by
Dr. Kirpal Singh, Principal Surjit Singh Gandhi
Avtar Singh Gill

DHARAM PARCHAR COMMITTEE
SHIROMANI GURDWARA PARBANDHAK COMMITTEE
SRI AMRITSAR

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&

INSTITUTE OF SIKH STUDIES, CHANDIGARH

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FOREWORD

It is a matter of pride that we are presenting the 3rd volume of *History of the Sikhs and Their Religion*. This forms a part of the series of 5 volumes to be published by the Dharam Parchar Committee of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar. While the 1st volume of this Project deals with the history of the Sikh Guru Period and the 2nd volume is about the 18th Century struggle of the Sikhs, the present, 3rd volume, covers the period of the Sikh ruler - Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

After a detailed research about the contents of writings by anti-Sikh writers, Dr Kharak Singh, Member, Dharam Parchar Committee prepared a plan in consultation with late Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President, SGPC, to write a correct version of Sikh history in English. SGPC allotted this project to Institute of Sikh Studies in 1997-98, with Dr Kharak Singh as Convenor, to write Sikh history from the Sikh point of view and decided to bring out this work in five volumes. Dr Kharak Singh, in collaboration with Dr Kirpal Singh, a prominent Sikh historian, compiled writings from various Sikh scholars, and prepared the first two volumes of this Project, before his demise in 2008. Thereafter, all responsibility of this Project came to rest with Dr Kirpal Singh, who is the editor of this volume and at the age of 95 he worked admirably to complete this task.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, was a man, who changed the course of the Indian history during his reign. He unified the warring states before his rise in the Punjab and was able to establish a vast and powerful Sikh empire between the two great powers of the time, viz., the British and the Afghans. He blocked the route across the river Indus, from where foreign raiders invaded India and devastated the land and its people for centuries. He was not only able to roll back the ever gushing tide of invasions from the North-Western Frontier but also crossed all the hurdles of the Indus, and unfurled his flag of victory at Jamrud. He changed the frontier of the country, both in the North-West and the North-East. Maharaja Ranjit Singh is the

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only ruler in Indian History, who had won the loyalty of the Muslims who were in majority in his kingdom

The contributors, who have written the various chapters of this volume, have done a commendable job. Late Principal Surjit Singh Gandhi and S Avtar Singh have assisted Dr. Kirpal Singh all have done hard work to prepare this volume.

I highly appreciate all the contributors, editors and their team for producing this volume. I am sure that the readers and scholars of Sikh history will be benefited immensely.

May 1, 2018

Gobind Singh Longowal
President
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Amrik Singh: An eminent educationist of India and a former Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala, has edited and contributed handsomely to major volumes or analysis such as Punjab in Indian Politics, Issues & Trends, Hindu Muslim Divide., His other publications include fifty years of UGC (an Award winning work, on the State of Higher Education in India), Asking for Trouble: What it means to be a Vice-Chancellor Today.

Anju Suri (Dr.): Born in 12.06.1969, done Ph.D. on the topic "Kapurthala State 1858-1948: A Study of the Working of British Paramountcy and Internal Administration" inthe Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Punjabi University, Patiala. Dr Suri has written around 7 books on History.

Attar Singh (Dr.): An accomplished analyist of contemporary Sikh affairs and an outstanding Punjabi literary critic, Professor (retd), Shiekh Baba Farid Chair in Medieval Indian Literature, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Among his notable works are; Sikhism and Sikh Faith (Secular Perspectives), Bhai Vir Singh, Life Times and Works (ed).

Avtar Singh, Addl. District & Session Judge (retd.): Born on Jue 27, 1930, he obtained Degree in Law from the Punjab University in 1952 and received the second highest marks in the PES (Judicial) competitive examination in 1954. He has written many books on Law, Religion and Sikh history. Besides writing other books and being a good scholar of Sikh history, especially the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors, he has written the books –*Maharaja and the Koh-i-noor, Blood Bath after Ranjit Singh, Lahore Darbar and Rani Jindan and Maharaja Dalip Singh CheatedOut.*

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Jasjit Singh, (Air Commodore), AVSM, VrC, VM, IAF (retd.): Former Director of Operations of the Indian Air Force, Director of India's premier strategic think tank, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi from 1987-2001. Author and editor of more than two dozen books including *Air Power in Modern Warfare* (1985); *Non-provocative Defence* (1989); *Nuclear India* (1998); *Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (1999); and *India's Defence Spending (2000),* he has published extensively on strategic and security issues. Visiting lecturer at defence and war colleges in India and abroad.

Joginder Singh (Dr.): Professor of History at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, where he also worked as Professor and Head of Namdhari Guru Ram Singh Chair, his specialization is on Sikh leadership of the early twentieth century. He has handsomely contributed in many other research projects

K.K. Khullar (Dr.): Former Director, Ministry of HRD (Department of Education), Government of India and author of '*Maharaja Ranjit Singh*' (1980), a biography. He has also written a Brochure on Maharaja Ranjit Singh and organised several features on the Punjab ruler for Radio and Doordarshan.

Kirpal Singh (Dr.): Dr. Kirpal Singh is a distinguished Sikh historian. He has authored about fifty books on Sikh history in English, Punjabi and Persian languages besides presenting innumerable research papers at the international seminars and symposiams on history. Dr. Kirpal Singh has written many books on the partition of Punjab in 1947. Amongst his pioneering works on history of the Guru period are *Janamsakhi Parampara* and *Perspectives on Sikh Gurus*. He had also been the editor of *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*. After Bhai Vir Singh, he translated in Punjabi and edited *Suraj Partap Granth* written by Bhai Santokh Singh.

N.K. Seth: He was a Librarian in AC Joshi Library, Panjab University, Chandigarh and was very much interested in Punjab History. He had written his Ph.D. thesis on Civil Administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Sarabjot Singh Behl (Prof.): Dept. of Architecture, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

Surjit Singh Gandhi (Principal): Formerly the Director of the SGPC Sikh History Research Board and Sikh Reference Library, Prof Gandhi is a renowned scholar of Sikh history. One of the main contributors to the four volume *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, he is the author of numerous research papers. Amongst his books are

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History of the Sikh Gurus, *Struggle of the Sikhs for Sovereignty*, and *Sikhs in the Eighteenth Century*. Prof Gandhi remained the Principal of Akal Degree College, Sangrur for many years.

V.N. Datta (Prof.): A versatile historian of our times with inpeccable academic commitment. He is emeritus professor of history at Kurukshetra University. His major area of research has been Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Punjab disturbances 1919 and Madan Lal Dhingra, he has also written various articles on Sikh History reflecting incisive insight.

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PREFACE

At the persuasion of late Dr. Kuldeep Singh who was the president of the Institute of the Sikh Studies, I joined the Institute of the Sikh Studies and met Dr. Kharak Singh who was then the Secretary of the Institute. At that time he was engaged in studying the various Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. He found number of mistakes about Sikh history and Sikh religion. Most of the books were in English and he used to study them one by one and write to the authors to correct these mistakes in the subsequent editions. He was the editor of *Abstract of Sikh Studies,* the quarterly journal of the Institute. He invited my articles for the journal and I began to contribute the articles as required; we became friends. Once we discussed why these foreign authors made horrible mistakes on the lives of the Gurus, Sikh Institutions etc. We came to the conclusion that these non-Sikh writers did not understand Sikh History and Sikh Theology. There was urgent need to provide Sikh History and Sikh Theology in English by Sikh authors. Thinking on these lines, Dr. Kharak Singh prepared a plan to publish five volumes of Sikh History and their Religion from Guru Nanak to the present day. These should be written by the Sikh Scholars. In 1999, he submitted a plan to Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC for this project, which was subsequently approved and the Institute started the work on that plan. A big meeting of the Sikh scholars was called where the plan was explained and they were requested to co-operate to make it successful. First volume dedicated to Sikh Gurus and Sikh Institutions was published in 2004 by the SGPC, Amritsar. Its Foreword was written by the president of SGPC, Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Second volume was the Sikh Struggle and the Misl Period, published in 2013. Both the books were edited by Dr. Kharak Singh along with myself as co-editor. Unfortunately, Dr. Kharak Singh passed away and the third volume Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Period was entrusted to me.

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Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, has the privilege of presenting the third volume of this series of five volumes. First, S. Gjinder Singh, Editor, *Abstracts of Sikh Studies*, took great interest to collect material. But he soon died. Late Principal Surjit Singh Gandhi was officially appointed as co-editor. He spent lot of time for scanning the manuscript and we prepared the draft of this volume before his death. Later on S Avtar Singh retired Sub-Judge helped to complete this typed script. Prof. Prithipal Singh Kapur gave valuable suggestions for compilation of this book.

Dr. Birendra Kaur and Bibi Sumit Kaur heldped in undertaking the proofreading of the manuscript. Thanks are due to Jaswant Rai who has carefully typed the entire manuscript and Prof. Priyanka Sethi (M.A, Ph.D.) who has gone through the entire book. Col. Uday Singh also deserves our sincere thanks for his valuable suggestions for Introduction of this volume.

We are grateful to all the scholars who contributed their articles for this volume. Our thanks are due to Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and its Dharam Parchar Committee for the help and assistance they have rendered in the publication of the 3rd volume of *History of the Sikhs and Their Religion.*

Kirpal Singh (Dr.)
Editor

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INTRODUCTION

In Indian history, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was like a meteor, who shot up in the sky and dominated the scene for about half a century. It was no mean achievement to create an empire between Satluj and Indus within one generation. Besides this, he unified the warring states before his rise in Punjab. But, for him there would have been no compact Punjab. He was able to roll back the ever gushing tide of invasions from the North Western Frontier and created a vast empire between the two great powers – Britishers and the Afghans.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh enriched history and multifarious phases in politics. He made unique contribution of international importance as he changed international boundaries on the North West of India as well as towards Tibet. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the first ruler who effectively checked turbulent tribes in the North West of India, the task which had never been done for centuries. On the North-East side of his Kingdom, i.e., Tibet campaign was made during the reign of Maharaja Sher Singh (1841-43) son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Raja Gulab Singh, who was a feudalist and his General Zorawar Singh conquered Ladakh and Baltistan. Treaty with Lhasa (Tibet) Govt was signed in September 1842.

According to *Ain-i-Akbari*, all following areas were included in Kabul province which were one of the provinces like Lahore (Punjab) or Multan. Kabul province had Pakhli, viz, modern district Hazara, etc. Later on when Ahmad Shah Abdali founded the Afghan kingdom in the 18th century, Peshawar region was its important unit. Not only this, the Afghan rulers in the West Punjab now in Pakistan, Kasur, Multan owed allegiance to the ruler of Afghanistan. Kashmir, which has now been cause of friction between India and Pakistan and has been referred to UNO several times, was part of Afghanistan. It was reserved for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to annex Kashmir. Kasur and

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Multan were conquered one after another by Ranjit Singh. After fifteen years of long struggle against Afghans, Battle of Naushehra in 1823, Battle of Saido 1827 and Battle of Balakot in 1831 – he annexed Peshawar areas in 1834 upto Khaiber Pass. In this way, but for the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the political map of North Western India would have been different. There would have been no Pakistan as the entire west Punjab (present Pakistan) was a part of Afghanistan along with Kashmir.

Amar Singh Thapa, the Nepali General had conquered almost all Punjab hill states in the first decade in 19th century. He wanted to conquer Kangra, the biggest fort in the Punjab hill States, when Maharaja Ranjit Singh intervened and defeated him. In this way, his dream of annexing the Punjab hill States was shattered.

Some primary sources are being given below related to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his personality and statesmanship. *Charbagh-i-Panjab* by Ganesh Das, covering the period from ancient times to 1849, presents a geo-cultural survey of India. Equally, the value of Dewan Amarnath's *Zafarnama* lies in providing vital information on the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Amarnath had an intimate knowledge of the period but the tone of his work is laudatory as he was commissioned by Ranjit Singh to undertake the work.

Zafarnamah Ranjit Singh*

Zafarnamah Ranjit Singh by Dewan Amar Nath is a contemporary Persian source for the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It deals with events uptil 1836-37 C.E. The author was son of Raja Dina Nath an influential courtier of the Maharaja. In 1889 B.K. (1832-33 C.E.) at the age of eleven he was singled out from amongst the students of his school to write an account of the gardens of Lahore. The work was accomplished under the title *Rauzatul Azhar* which forms the last chapter of *Zafarnamah*.[1] The writer was commissioned by the Maharaja to write *Zafarnamah* in 1832-33 C.E. as it has been stated by the author himself. In order to celebrate the victory of Lahore Darbar forces when they conquered and annexed Peshawar in 1834 he wrote *Fatehnamh*. This work was also later on included in the *Zafarnamah*.[2]

The *Zafarnamah* consists of forty one chapters of varying sizes. The earlier chapters are generally short. But the shortest are fifth and the thirteenth chapters consisting of a page and a half. One of the reasons of this brevity appears to be that the writer has collected his information from his contemporaries. Therefore the earlier

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* Diwan Amarnath wrote many pamphlets, e.g., *Iqbalnama*, *Zafarnama*, *Gardens of Lahore*, etc., Sita Ram Kohli compiled and edited all the Persian writings of Diwan Amarnath under the title of *Zafarnama* Ranjit Singh. These writings give details of the victories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. *Zafarnama* in Persian published by Punjab University, Lahore in 1928 and *Zafarnama* in Punjabi edited by Kirpal Singh and published by Punjabi University, Patiala in 1983.

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chapters lack cohesion. There is no unity of thought. The separate news items have been recorded under the heading "Events of the year so and so." The first chapter is devoted to early life of Ranjit Singh upto his conquest of Lahore in 1799 C.E. The chronological order of the chapters start from the second chapter viz. 1857 B.K. (1800 C.E.) and ends with 39th chapter which deals with the events of 1892 B.K. (1835-36 C.E.) From the second to 39th chapter, one uniform pattern has been followed for recording the events of one year in a chapter. It is in chronological order. Every chapter begins with a title which is indicative of the contents in that chapter. For instance, 36th chapter has the title, "Events of the year 1889 B.K. (1832-33) marriage with Gul Bahar Begum." Sometimes these chapter had very lengthy title such as 35th chapter which has got the following title, "Events of the year 1888 B.K (1831-32 C.E.), end of *Khilafat* of Syed Ahmad, Shah Shujah affairs in British hands, defeat of Shah by Dost Muhammadm ruler of Kabul, meeting of the British Lord with the exalted *Sarkar*."

The 40th chapter, one of the long chapter (pages 257-271) with title, "*Shadinama Kanwar Naunihal Singh*" gives an account of the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh, the grandson of the Maharaja. The account is intercepted with the verses indicating the enjoyment. The last chapter with the title *Rauzatul Azhar* gives an account of the gardens of Lahore and its surroundings area. It is the longest one (pages 272-308). Its first portion is in prose and the second in verse. The first part deals with the description of gardens and the second with the miscellaneous matters like meeting of Illahi Bakhsh with the Maharaja and Mirza Akram Beg, etc. The book ends with the praise of Ranjit Singh.

Amar Nath was personally acquainted with most of the influential men at the Court and thus background of general experience of men and things around him stood in good stead in writing his history. Some of those men who had taken part in the early conquests of Ranjit Singh were alive when the author started collecting his material for writing history. In certain cases details of events were fresh in the memory of the people. In the Preface, the author has clearly stated: ਉਸ ਨੇ ਸਮਕਾਲੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਦੇ ਹਾਲਾਤ ਦਾ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਪੂਰਬਕ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਹਾਲ ਵਿਸਥਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਲਿਖੇ.[3] (He had learnt the history of the king from elderly contemporary and then he wrote it in detail.)

Thus *Zafarnamah* is one of the most important original sources of information concerning the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In *Fatehnamah,* which is included in the 38th chapter of *Zafarnamah,* the author has stated that he visited all the conquered territories of the North Western frontier and has written the account accordingly. It is very interesting to note that he has used the local names which could only be used after visiting the locality. For instance, he states that the Maharaja forces conquered Bangshat. About Bangshat, H. A. Rose writes in the *Glossary of Castes and Tribes of the*

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Punjab and North Western Frontier, Vol. II, p. 57: This is a name given to a number of Afghan tribes as well as the tract of mountainous country which they held. The tract is divided Bala (upper) and Patn (Lower). Bangash or Bangshat in plural.....Roughly speaking upper Bangash included Kurram and lower Bangash the country around Kohat.[4]

Another local name used is 'Hot' which was the territory near Dera Ismail Khan as Rose writes that the Hot tribe ruled at Dera Ismail Khan for more than two hundred years.[5] In the Gazetteer of Dera Ismail Khan it is stated, "The Head quarters of Hot Baluch was first fixed at Balar, a village on the Indus twenty miles south of Dera Ismail Khan. They afterwards founded Dera Ismail Khan."[6]

"Thatta" is a local name of the territory north of Hassan Abdal (Panja Sahib) in the modern district of Cambelpur or Attock. It is usually called territory Thatta Dumel.

"Pothohar" is a local name of the territory now included in the modern district of Rawalpindi.

"Dhani" is a local name of the territory included in the modern district of Jehlum.

1. Amar Nath is an historian in the traditional sense. To him the past politics was history. He does not deal with socio-economic institutions of his times. His main emphasis had been on the political events. But in his writings he has displayed a great historical sense. He compiled *Zafarnamah* at very young age and he has used the important Persian manuscripts on history available at that time. He mentions *Ain-i-Akbari* frequently and quotes from this work.
2. Another work mentioned by him is *Khalsa Namah* or *Singh Namah* which was compiled by his grandfather Bakhat Mal. It is the history of the Sikhs-Guru Nanak and his nine successors, Banda Bahadur, *Misls* and ends with Ranjit Singh's first compaign to the cis-Sutlej area, viz 1806 C.E. He writes that he could not repeat what has already been written. So he started this book with the conquests of Ranjit Singh after 1806 C.E.
3. Another book mentioned is *Tazakar-i-Anand Raj.* Anand Raj has been *munshi* of Abdul Samad Khan (1716-1726 C.E.) and his famous son Zakaria Khan (1726-1745) the most influential Mughal Governors of the Punjab during 18th century. When the writer gives the 18th century history he quotes Anand Raj frequently for details, see chapter 21st which deals with 18th century history of Multan. The use of the one of the most important contemporary work indicates the historical sense of Amar Nath.
4. Amar Nath frequently refers to *Umadtu-t-Tawarikh.* It was written by Sohan Lal Suri who had been employed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to write day-to-day diary. Since *Zafarnamah* was also commissioned by the Maharaja, both these works represent the point of view of Lahore Darbar. So it would be in fitness

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of things to study these two works in detail as both had access to the official documents.

Sohan Lal's approach is that of diarist giving day-to-day account in full detail. Amar Nath's approach is selective. He would select most important events & write them in his own peculiar literary style. For instance, the author of *Zafarnamah* has selected one event for the year 1893 B.K., viz, marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh and devoted full one chapter for this. Whereas, Sohan Lal wrote one portion of his Daftar III Part III for 1893 B.K. and devoted some pages to the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh.

Zafaranamah is disappointing with regard to Anglo-Sikh relations. It does not throw fresh light on the relation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with the British. Perhaps, the author had no interest in it. But it does throw new light on certain events of the times. At places, he gives information which is not available anywhere else.

Zafarnamah throws fresh light on so many minute details left by the court chronicler, Sohan Lal Suri. For instance, the actual ceremony of Kanwar Naunihal Singh's marriage has not been described by any of the contemporaries. Amar Nath writes that with chanting of hymns at midnight. The appropriate hour had been selected by the astrologers.

Amar Nath narrates the following circumstances how Harlan was turned out of the Kingdom of Lahore. Once Maharaja fell ill and his tongue began to stammer, Harlan was called as he was known to have learnt the art of medicine. After feeling the pulse of the Maharaja, he declared that he would cure him on the condition that he might be granted one *lakh* of *rupees*. The Maharaja felt offended on this insolent utterance which confirmed his pre-monitions about the man and ordered that he should be turned out of the Kingdom barefooted. He was made to cross the Sutlej barefooted and later on he went to Kabul and joined the services of Dost Mohammad, the ruler of Kabul.

Char Bagh-i-Punjab*

After writing the History of Punjab, Ganesh Dass named it *Risala-i-Sahibnama*, but some friends gave it the title of *Char Bagh-i-Punjab,* as it gives the Hijri era corresponding to 1849 AD, the date of its compilation. It is the history of Punjab

* *Char Bagh-i-Punjab* by Ganesh Dass Wadehra, a Persian Manuscripts was discovered by Karam Singh Historian and from that finally Dr Ganda Singh obtained. Kirpal Singh working in the research department of Khalsa College Amritsar edited it after comparing its texts with other available manuscripts and it was published by Khalsa College of Amritsar 1965 under the Govt of India scheme of publishing the manuscripts. The above noted extracts are from this Persian book. For more detail see Sikh History Sources & Historiography (Part II) by Kirpal Singh, published by Punjabi Unviersity, Patiala 2015.

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from ancient time to 1849, when the Punjab was annexed by the British.

Ganesh Dass himself was a revenue official of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He therefore, knew the administration of the Maharaja intimately and has paid highest tribute to the Maharaja. He writes, "The Maharaja knew all from the highest to lowest in the Army and called them for various assignments. He treated everybody according to his status. The Maharaja could recognize a person even after ten years. He knew the names of various Chaudaries, landlorads, quanungos and various other officials and often at the time of necessity addressed *parwanas* to them by name. The Maharaja was very generous towards his subordinates, whosoever, came near him was bestowed with honour, fortune and wealth. Persons like me who remained cut off from the presence were most unfortunate. In his court, gold and wealth were showered from every nook and corner and the courtiers consider any one equal to themselves". (*Char-Bagh-i-Punjab*, Original Persian Text, page 326)

How did the fate of Gujrat hang between the Sikhs and the Afghans has been described in details. So far, we do not find any other source giving so much detail regarding the Sikh occupation of the territory beyond the river Chenab. The author writes, "When Sardar Charat Singh and Gujar Singh had gone towards Majha (towards Lahore and Amritsar), Sarbuland Khan, who had been appointed as governor of this area by Ahmad Shah Abdali (the Afghan Emperor), sent his forces to conquer Gujrat. Rehmat Khan Varaich, Chaudhari of Pargana Herat and revenue officials of Gujrat met Sarbuland Khan in the fort of Rohtas. The Afghan governor imprisoned them and killed Chaudhary Rehmat Khan and Dewan Shiv Nath on the charge that they had invited the Khalsa to Gujrat. On hearing this, Charat Singh and Gujar Singh recrossed the Chenab. The Afghans opposed them but were defeated and were forced to take shelter in the Rohtas fort. The Khalsa army besieged the fort for four months after which the fort was conquered and Sarbuland Khan taken as prisoner. The conquered territory was divided according to previous agreement. The territories of Rohtas, Dhan Baloki, Pothohar, Gheb, Makhad were given to Charat Singh and territories of Wangol, Bhurwal, Purchiwal and Khanpur upto the boundary of river Attock were taken by Gujar Singh. The latter administered the newly acquired territory in the following way: Rawalpindi was given to Milkha Singh as Jagir, tapa of Narli and Rutara fort to his younger brother Chet Singh, Sarai Kara to Ram Singh Paddu, Miani and Shamsabad also called Pind Dadan Khan to Charat Singh and Dharam Singh Patasa, fort of Dilawar in the salt range to Tehal Singh Chhachi. Jodh Singh Attari was appointed collector of Pothohar and Kallar territories. Dal Singh Gill was appointed as Nazim of Ahmedabad and village Janaki was given to him as *Jagir*.

Ganesh Dass has given the historical details of various localities with which he was familiar. He honestly stated that he was not aware of certain territories. Just as in

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the case of Jullundar Doab, he stated that he did not know beyond what he has written *(vide* page 305). He has given folktales, accounts of prominent persons, geographical details, cultural activities of certain people of the localities in the towns. Various details about the local history of Gujarat and Sialkot have been recorded. This work is a goldmine of information pertaining to the later half of the18th and first half of the 19th century history of the Punjab.

Ganesh Dass, does not provide a list of reliable sources of information on which he had based his narration. Neither does he quote documents or *Sanads,* nor, like the modern writers discusses the various versions of the same events. He has given the events as he understood them. Besides that, he was a revenue official who knew the details of revenue administration of the Mughal and of the Sikh times. He was conversant with the various divisions and sub-divisions into which the country was divided for collection of revenue. According to him, the *Parganas* were divided into *tappas* and *tappas* into *tops.* He has furnished the names of *tappas* and *tops.*

Char Bhag-i-Punjab is different in matter as well as in treatment. The early settlement officers in the Punjab had taken upon themselves to collect data about local histories, traditions, legends and other important particulars connected with a place. This type of work was subsequently undertaken by the writers of customary laws and district gazetteers. Ganesh Dass was perhaps the pioneer in this respect. He was the first Indian writer in the Punjab to adopt this method of linking geographical location with historical and cultural traditions of a particular place. For instance, he does not mention the town of Gujrat or Sialkot in a passing but he would give its earliest history, important historical events connected with it, its legends, important places of worship prominent persons including writers of past or contemporary ones belonging to that place. From this point of view *Char Bagh-i-Punjab* has got a unique importance as it brings to notice a transitional phase from medieval to modern.

The author neither gives the history of the modern Punjab nor of the British Punjab which was extended from Delhi to Khyber. He narrates the events of the land of five rivers or Suba Lahore of *Ain-i-Akbari.* The contemporary writer like Ghulam Mohyuddin Bute Shah, the author of *Tarikh-i-Punjab,* considered *Suba* Lahore to be the Punjab and their description of the boundaries of the Punjab is identical to the boundaries of *Suba* Lahore as given in the *Ain-i-Akbari.*[7] Here the contemporary British writers like Captain Murray and Col. Steinbach have confused the Punjab with the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[8] But Ganesh Dass was very clear in his mind and has narrated the history connected with the land between the Indus and the Sutlej. Since, the confluence of the river Beas and Sutlej was counted as one river instead of two[9], the territory between Sutlej and the Indus rivers was known as the Punjab.

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Ganesh Dass has arranged his material in the following manner: A brief and sketchy history of the Punjab has been given before the advent of the Muslims. Here the narration is full of genealogical tables. This is followed by the Muslim period from Mahmud of Ghazni to the invasion of Shah Zaman in the last decade of the 18th century. One-fourth of the work is devoted to this portion. This is followed by the rise of Sikh power from the times of Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The most important portion of the book is geographico-cultural survey of the Punjab giving details of rivers, doabs, important villages and towns, places of worship, religious denominations, folktales, romances connected with various places, poets and writers relating to a particular place. This is a fairly detailed account covering about one-third of the book. At the end, the author reconnects the previous link and describes Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign. The book ends with the Anglo-Sikh Wars and the annexation of the Punjab in 1849.

Since, the author and his family were connected with the Sikh Chiefs, he has displayed a deep understanding of the period relating to the Sikh rule in the Punjab. He has provided the information relating to the Sikh rule in Gujrat area which is not available anywhere else. He also surveyed the entire spectrum of Sikh history from its very inception. He has written a Persian Chronogram about the demise of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhsim. "Nanak left this earthly abode, as if the rose disappeared from the garden." *Nanak Az Jahan Rafat Gul Az Bagh Bairon Shud* (946 Hijri).[10] After giving a brief account of all the Gurus, he has given detailed account of the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh and the code of conduct prescribed by him.

This is followed by a brief account of 18th century, history of the Sikhs. After that, he gives a detailed account of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule, since he has been a contemporary of Ranjit Singh. He has narrated minutely the administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh along with the graphical account of his ancestors, especially, Charat Singh, the founder of Shukarchakia Misl.

According to the author, Ranjit Singh had a great reputation as a warrior even before he captured Lahore. The very mention of his name could strike terror in the hearts of Afghans and turn the scales of battle as early as 1798 when Ranjit Singh was a youth of eighteen. Ganesh Dass has described Sikh-Afghan conflict in the following manner, "Taking the shelter of Islamgarh fort at their back and making alliance with the landlords like Hyat Ahmed Khan Shahanchi pitched his tents near village Sok. On the second day, Sunday, 1855 BK (1798 C.E.) he turned towards the west to conquer the town of Gujrat. Sardar Sahib Singh came with his limited force of horsemen and foot soldiers. The Sikhs started firing on the Afghans and under this heavy firing, as the Afghans were advancing forwards gates of the town at that critical juncture, there rose a loud cry that Ranjit Singh had reached with his reinforcement.

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Mention of his auspicious name brought the breeze of victory on the banners of Khalsa. Suddenly, one shot killed Ahmed Khan. Most of the Afghans fled away and Khalsa captured much booty. That Brahmin woman whom he (Ahmed Khan) had forcibly married was taken from his tent and delivered to her parents. The dead body of Ahmed Khan was humiliated and his cap was fastened on the top of the banner and displayed from town to town."[11]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had not participated in the battle in which Ahmed Khan Shahanchi was killed. But he was shrewd enough not to lose this opportunity to consolidate his power. He, therefore sent Milkha Singh, Uttam Singh and Jodh Singh, to occupy the Pothohar territory up to Panja Sahib and appointed Dewan Lakhpat Rai to maintain law and order in the area of Gheb Mandi and Salt Range. According to the author, the Dewan was wisely successful in suppressing the rebellious elements and collected revenue from this area. "When he was returning, one fanatic Muslim attacked him with dagger through treachery and killed him. The companion of the Dewan immediately caught hold of the murderer and put him to death instantly. The body of the Dewan Lakhpat Rai was taken to Katas, bathed in the holy water and cremated there".[12]

Hardinge's Account of First Sikh War (based on Private Letters)*

Sometimes, the Governor-General in India decided important issues by undertaking private correspondence with their superior in England. The private correspondence preserved with the various families in England indicates that the problems of administration, war and strategy were often discussed in the letters addressed to the near and dear ones. The writer of this article, therefore, utilized his brief stay in England in 1964 to study and collect family records relating to the history of the Punjab. Private records preserved at Penshurst are very important for the scholars of Indian History. The Hardinge family at Penshurst is a historic family so far as the history of India is concerned. Both Governors-General, Sir Henry Hardinge (1844-48) and the Viceroy Harding (1910-16), belonged to this family. The latter was the grandson of the former, Sir Henry Hardinge, famous in the history of the Punjab

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* Master Tara Singh famous Akali Leader gave me a introductory letter for his friend Major James Short (Billy Short). He lived not very far off from Penshurst, the village of Hardinge family, Governor General Henry Hardinge 1844-48 and his grandsons Viceroy Hardinge 1911-16. This family had preserved private records relating to India. Major James Short went with me and introduced me to Lady Helen Hardinge who was daughter in law of Viceroy Hardinge. I told that I wanted to search and find out the records relating to Punjab. She was very courteous I told her I would search the records for two or three weeks. I would daily come from London, work here and go back in the evening. That was regard due to Major James Short. The material of this article was collected from the family archieves at Penshurst.

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as he fought the First Sikh War of 1845-46. Recently, the family at Penshurst allowed the Cambridge University to acquire papers relating to the Viceroy Hardinge. Helen, Lady Hardinge, the daughter-in-law of the Viceroy Hardinge, who is so nicely keeping the family records at Penshurst, told the writer that some of the papers relating to the Governor-General Sir Henry Hardinge (1844-48) had been taken to Canada, as a branch of the family had shifted there. The family records there are said to have been deposited with the McGill University.

This paper relates to the private letters addressed by Sir Henry Hardinge (later, Lord Hardinge) to his wife Emily Hardinge during the first Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46. This correspondence has not so far been utilized by the scholars, though some of his letters addressed to Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, have seen the light of the day, as C.S. Parker writes in the preface to his book *Sir Robert Peel.* A third correspondence of singular interest was with Hardinge. "It exhibits two devoted friends – a soldier and a civilian – separated by many thousand miles, each playing the chief part in desperate but victorious contest, the one with foes abroad and the other with factions at home, yet finding time to watch with warmest sympathy the other's fortunes and exchange assurances of mutual confidence and unalterable affection."[13]

The letters[14] of Sir Henry Hardinge relating to the First Sikh War are very important, as these reveal the true working of his mind. He has not admitted his secret deal with Raja Gulab Singh anywhere else, except in a letter to his wife, dated 2nd Feb., 1846 – a week before the battle of Sabraon on 10th Feb; 1846. He writes, "I have a communication from Raja Gulab Singh which may lead to overtures for an arrangement; he is to be made a minister and says he is ready to do whatever we like to order. I am obliged to be very cold and haughty, but I propose to allow him to come here to propose terms and make a beginning."[15] It may be noted that Captain J.D. Cunningham, the famous author of the *History of the Sikhs*, was the first person who mentioned this agreement and he was heavily punished for leaking out this official secret. According to this secret understanding with Raja Gulab Singh, the following terms were agreed:

1. The Sikh Army should be attacked by the British Army.
2. After being defeated, it should be abandoned by its own government.
3. The passage of the Sutlej should be unopposed and the road to the Capital be laid open to the Victor.[16]

A year before, Raja Gulab Singh had been in correspondence with Sir Henry Hardinge and had persuaded him to conquer the Punjab. Sir Henry himself admitted this fact in a letter written to Lord Ellenborough. This letter is dated Feb 20, 1845, and has been written from Calcutta. Sir Hery writes, "Gulab Singh has again written to us, delighted to enter into terms with us. The First overture was a voluntary offer

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of his own through a confidential emissary. The letter I now allude to is in answer to the intrigue of a French man, who took into his head to go to Jammo from Loodiana… The Raja's letter by his own emissary had been previously received and rejected."[17]

In another letter, dated September 8, 1845, Sir Henry writes to Sir Robert Peel, "Major Broadfoot reports that the State of anarchy and fear at Lahore is such that the most influential chiefs desire our interference and in his dispatch he specifies their names… But the case now brought forward by Major Broadfoot is on the supposition that Sikh Gorvernment cannot be maintained."[18]

Here, no names of any Sikh chiefs or Chief have been mentioned but "influential chiefs" mainly meant none other than Raja Gulab Singh. In his correspondence to his wife, we find the name of Raja Gulab Singh occurring several times. In a letter, dated December 3, 1845, before the commencement of hostilities he writes, "Another competitor for power, Raja Gulab Singh, is encouraging every kind of dissension adverse to Ranee's power. The troops are for the most part favourable to his pretensions." Writing just after the battle of Subraon, he stated on 19th Feb. 1846, "Well – I have the ablest scoundrel in all Asia close to my camp – The Wazzir R Gulab Singh – a good-looking, clever-eyed man of about 50, and yesterday he brought the little Maharaja to my Durbar tent to make his submission and pay tribute," On the first of March he wrote, "I cannot say whether my policy in dealing with the Sikh nation will be approved or not… I also had explained that the native states, to be kept up in these frontier countries, ought to be Hindoos to act as our advanced Guard of Mahomedan Tribes who have for ages invaded India by this way of Lahore… I have annexed a very rich district bounded by river Beas to the Indian Empire chiefly to improve our frontier… I have made all the Hill Tribes touching our Hill frontier independent of the Sikhs for nearly 300 miles to the extent touching up to Attock on the Indus taking in Kashmir and I have placed all these countries under a Rajpoot Dynasty or chief called Raja Gulab Singh who is by religion a Hindu. Thus, I have punished the Sikhs for their unprovoked aggression upon us by stripping them of 1/3 of their territory and making it over to a Rajpoot who is to be independent of them."[19] Again he wrote to his wife on the 2nd March, "The man whom I have to deal with, Gulab Singh is the greatest rascal in Asia unfortunately. It is necessary to improve his condition because he did not participate in the war against us and his territories touching ours, we can protect him without inconvenience and give him a slice of Sikh territory, which balances his strength in some degree against theirs, and as he is geographically our ally. I must forget he is a rascal and treat him better than he deserve."[20]

The above noted letters indicate the following:

1. The Governor-General appears to be angry with Raja Gulab Singh as he used for him

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the words "Greatest rascal", "Ablest scoundrel in Asia". While persuading the British to conquer the Punjab, Raja Gulab Singh must have drawn a very rosy picture which proved to be the contrary. This might be one of the causes of his anguish. Sir Henry's son and his private Secretary Charles Hardinge, who was himself present during the war, subsequently described the heavy loss that the British Army suffered. "The battlefield of Firozshah disclosed horrible mutilation amongst the British officers and men who had fallen into the enemy's hands." At another place he writes, "Never perhaps was so obstinate a contest carried on to the end, never before was such cohesion displayed in the ranks of Khalsa Army."

2. Perhaps Sir Henry was the first person who initiated a policy of communal poise in the Punjab. He gave Raja Gulab Singh Kashmir and wanted the Sikh Army of Lahore Durbar to fight the Muslim tribes in the north-western frontier. He clearly stated that "...the native states kept up in these frontier countries ought to be Hindus, to act as our advanced Guard of Mohomedan Tribes." This policy of communal poise pitting one community against another was openly followed by many British statesmen like Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India in 1925.
3. By granting Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh, Sir Henry was counterbalancing the resources of the Lahore durbar and substantially crippling the power of the latter. His following words quoted above are significant. "Sikhs... by stripping them of one-third of their territory and making it over to a Rajpoot who is to be independent of them."

Since these letters were mostly written during the war, in some of the letters he disclosed to his wife the war strategy that he was following. Feb 10, 1846 was fixed for the battle which is, subsequently, known as the battle of Subraon. He explained to his wife in a letter "on the 7th and 8th, guns and ammunition arrived from the rear and the force under Sir Henry Smith which had been detached to Loodiana and had defeated the enemy returned to the camp on the 8th." On the 10th Feb, has been given in a nutshell in another letter, "We first commanded it for two hours and then let loose our brave infantry, and in 2 hours, we had gained the camp, destroyed the enemy and captured 67 pieces of artillery."

Note: As per agreement with the Govt of Punjab, I deposited all the material collected from England in the Punjab State Archives, Patiala. In the above-noted material was brought in the form of micro-film from England to India by me.

The Anglo-Sikh Wars 1845 and 1846 was First War of Independence

The Anglo-Sikh war of 1849 in reality was the first war of independence. This war changed the thinking of the Indian military men who always considered themselves inferior to the British soldiers. It broke the invincibility of the British army and proved that Indians were no longer inferior. The revolt of 1857 was inspired by the bravery of the Indian soldiers both Sikhs and Muslim who jointly fought against the British in 1849. The army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not consist of Sikhs alone. Shah Mohammed, the contemporary writer writes about the Muslims participation in the

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Punjab war:

Mazar Ali and Makhe Khan marched out from the city
The Brigade of Sultan Mehmood also came out
With invincible Imam Shahi guns in tow.
Elahi Baksh brought out his guns after polishing them.
And showing them worshipful burning sticks.
O! Shah Mohammed in such a way did the Guns shine.
As if these were the flashes of lightening out to dispel the darkness.[21]

The army organized by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was on secular basis and had in it Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.[22] Dogras under Gulab Singh remained aloof. He had his own reasons as he was intriguing with the British against Lahore Darbar. All others fought against the British. Had there been no treachery by Gulab Singh, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, the British would have been defeated.[23] It was this glorious war that inspired not only Indian soldiers fighting on the British side but also impressed the Britishers who have written marvelous comments on the bravery of the people. It may be noted that the war was being fought against the aggressive policy of the Britishers, a fact which has been admitted by British writers.

The British had for long been following an aggressive policy towards the Lahore kingdom and ultimately they were the first to violate the treaty of permanent friendship of 1809, signed between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the East India Company, long before the Punjab forces crossed the Sutlej. Upholding the position of the Lahore Durbar, Major G Carmichael Smyth writes, "We have been told that the Sikh violated the treaty by crossing the river with their army, but the question… I only ask, had we not departed from the rules of friendship first? The year before war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozpur and the Punjab, though it belonged to the Sikhs… Regarding the Punjab war, I am neither of the opinion that the Sikhs made an unprovoked attack nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance. If the Sikhs' were to be considered entirely an independent State in no way answerable to us, we should not have provoked them, for to assert that bridges of boats brought from Bombay was not a *casus belli* but merely a defensive measure is absurd."[24]

That the British had been preparing in advance for the eventuality of war, is further proved by the following facts:

Till 1838 Ludhiana was the only cantonment of the British next to Lahore frontier with only three thousand men and twelve cannons. By the end of 1838 Firozpur had been converted into a British cantonment with five thousand men and twelve cannons. Cantonments were also established by the British at Ambala, Kasuali and Simla and fourteenth European troops and forty-eight cannons were established there. After his arrival in India, Lord Hardinge further increased the strength of his forces in these cantonments by twenty two thousands men and twelve cannons. While just before the

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war their total strength was increased to forty four thousand men and one hundred cannons.[25]

There were four battles i.e. Mudki, Pherushah, Aliwal and Subraon. The last was fought on the 10th of February 1846. About this battle R, Bosworthsmith writes:

"One old chief whose name should be recorded Sham Singh, among the faithless faithful only found clothed in white and devoting himself to death, like Decius of old called on those around him to strike for God and the Guru and dealing with everywhere rushed manfully upon his own."[26]

Memammed Latif writes, "... dressed himself in a garment as white as his long snowy beard, galloped forward, cheering on his ardent followers and scorning death till the last he fell martyr to his country's freedom".[27] His superb example was a beacon and a source of inspiration to the numerous freedom fighters who fought against the British from 1846 to 1947.[27]

Sardar Sham Singh, also knowing that 10th February was going to be the day of battle rose early in the morning, dressed himself in white, and mounting his white mare proceeded to address the Army. He reminded them about their glorious traditions of bravery and sacrifice in the past and begged them, as true sons of the soil, to die rather than turn their backs on the enemy. Since, he had himself dedicated his life to the sacred cause, his words had the desired effect.[28]

Glibert's Division led the third charge on the centre. Mounting on one another's shoulders, the attackers gained a footing on the entrenchments and as they increased in number they rushed at the Sikh guns and captured them. Soon the news spread down the line that enemy troops had won their way through to Sikh positions.[29] Sardar Sham Singh seeing his army facing defeat, took the final fatal plunge. He spurred forward against the 50th Foot, brandishing his sword and calling on his men to follow him. But soon he fell from his horse, his body pierced with seven baolls. He had remained true to his vow to the last. The self sacrifice of Sardar Sham Singh, the hero of Sabraon, had an inspiring effect. His courage and determination turned Sabraon into the Waterloo of India, as according to Malleson, victory for the Punjab would have meant to the English the loss of India.[30]

It was the war of Punjab which inspired the rising of 1857. This fact is not so well known. So the Punjab Wars of 1845-46 and 1849 were a real watershed in the ideology of India's fighting forces and the 1849 war was the real first war of Independence.

How Tenth February, 1846 was fixed for The Battle of Subraon

After the Battle of Firozshah it was clear that the army of Lahore Darbar was not inferior to the British forces for the final battle, Henry Hardinge thought that

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more ammunition and guns were required to win the battle. It was essential to win the battle according to the terms settled in the secret agreement with Gulab Singh so that free passage to Lahore could be given to the British forces. For the reinforcement he brought guns and ammunition from the forces under Sir Henry Smith's camp as he wrote to his wife in his letter written on 7th and 8th February. It is clear that 10th February was fixed for the battle of Subraon by the Governor Henry Hardinge.

Normally the wars are never fought by fixing the dates. It is clear that with the help of the traitors from the Khalsa army Tej Singh and Lal Singh they declared the date for fighting the 10th February and ammunition arrived on 8th February.

The British had a very hard time during the battle of Firozshah. The Sikhs held upperhand on the first day. G.B. Melleson writes, "Then among many point set in. The cry of "India Lost" was heard from one Commanding Officer who tried in vain to rally his men. The left attack on the Khalsa had failed so signally that it could not be renewed. The Sikh Army had repulsed the British attack. They had driven back Litler, forced Smith to retire, compelled even Gilbert to evacuate the position he had gained and had thrown the whole British army into disorder."

G. B. Malleson has written a book "Ten Important Battles in the World" and he has included the Battle of Sabraon as one of them. He called this battle "Waterloo of India".

Col. Mecleod's Private Letters Giving Details of Second Sikh War*

The official despatches and communiqués relating to the military actions in the battlefield sometimes give misleading impressions. But the private letters written by important persons taking part in the battlefield give the real picture. Hence the private letters constitute an important source of information.

Col. Alexander Mecleod's private letters are important because it is an eye-witness account of the Second Sikh War. The writer participated in major actions. After the battle of Chillianwala, he was promoted as Brigadier. He belonged to Her Majesty' 61th Foot Regiment. His son was also in the British Army in England and in order to acquaint him of the military situation he used to write detailed account of the battles in which he had participated. These letters, therefore, give the first hand information and throw fresh light on the details of the battle. His earlier letters give a lot of information about the political situation in the Punjab in general and the Sikhs in particular.

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* These private letters have been collected by Dr Kirpal Singh whose research tour was sanctioned by the Punjab Govt under S Partap Singh Kairon. Special grant was sanctioned for touring and purchasing of micro films. He researched Edenborough Archive and got the Micro Film of these letters which, according to the agreement with the Govt, were deposited in the Punjab State Archive.

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Col. Alexander Mecleod's private letters were addressed to his wife Nancy and his son William. These are preserved in Edenborough. These letters are twenty in all and cover the period from March 19, 1846 to July 27, 1849 and throw a flood of light on the condition of the Punjab just after the First Sikh War and events of the Second Sikh War. Every letter is dated and indicates the place from where it was written. Eight letters have been written from Jullundur, two from Ambala, one from Ramgarh, two from right bank of Ravi, one from Ramnaggar, one from Chillianwala, one from Sadupore, etc. All these letters give first hand information. Where the writer was in doubt, he wrote very explicitly. For instance he wrote next day after the Battle of Chillianwala about Major Harris who had been killed:

> "The 24 have suffered most awfully Brigadier Pannywoick and Lt Col. Boke killed. Major Harris, I hear also. All field officers were knocked over and I believe some confusion took place. Do not say anything about Major Harris as it is merely hearsay. He is certainly wounded if not killed. These are desperate times. I wish it were over."[31]

Alexander Mecleod wrote to his son, William after the First Sikh War:-

> "We were not at first prepared as we ought to have been and Sir H. Gough found the Sikhs made of different metal from the Chinese".[32]

The latter part of the statement viz. Sir H. Gough "found the Sikhs made of different metal than the Chinese" is very significant. Because, during his campaigns in China, Sir Gough never met such a determined opposition as being displayed by the Sikhs. His military strategy had never been so questioned as to raise sharp controversies. His biographer writes "years of his Indian command are marked by series of controversies."[33]

Before the rebellion of Dewan Mul Raj, MecLeod wrote from Jullundur: "The Sikhs are all very quiet at present. They have no money to organise an army and so long this is the case they must remain quiet. We are called a moveable column and are obliged to keep camels in pay to be ready to move on the shortest notice in light marching order. The troops at Lahore and Ferozepur are the same so that 30,000 could move on any point at a few hours' notice".[34]

For some time Col. MecLeod worked with Brigadier Wheeler. Both were together at Batala. In his letter dated November 12, 1848 he describes the palace of Maharaja Sher Singh. He writes, "Since I last wrote we took up our camp between the Beas and the Ravee at Batala, a beautiful country and a fine palace belonging to Lenah Singh (sic) who wisely makes a pilgrimage to the Holy city of Benarse when he finds the chiefs of the country on the eve of rebellion and thereby escapes their vengeance and loss of his property."[35] Here Col. MecLeod has confused the names. The palace of Batala where at present we have a Christian College never belonged to Lehna Singh Majithia who at that time had gone for pilgrimage. On the other hand, the palace

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belonged to Maharaja Sher Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who ruled from 1841 to 1843 and was killed by Sandhawalia chiefs. However, Col MecLeod's description of the palace is very informative. "There was very large tank or rather artificial lake with a beautiful summer house in the centre, the roof all plate looking glass which the soldiers almost destroyed, and I am to say a very fine young fellow of St. Coy. 61st was drowned by the upsetting of a boat from too many getting in. Another was taken out almost lifeless but recovered. It was beautiful to see the elephants diving for them in 20 feet water. This place was only 48 miles from Jullundur and the Brigadier went off to visit his wife and children."[36]

Here McLeod got orders to march. He writes, "I received an express from Lord Gough to move the train down to this ford on the Ravee to join Brigadier Campbell from Lahore to support the Cavalry Division advanced in pursuit of Sher Singh".[37]

"We cross tomorrow morning and we are within three marches of Mr. Sher Singh who is said to have 30 guns and about 16,000 men. I expect they will make one good fight of it".[38]

Alexander MelcLeod gives a beautiful description of the battle of Ramnagar on the bank of river Chenab where he himself was present.

"The whole of the Cavalry and Brigadier Campbell's Division of Infantry marched at 3 O'clock a.m. on the 22nd just in order of battle to drive them across the river and we came in sight of the Sikh camp at day night. The main body had crossed leaving strong pickets of cavalry and infantry on this side. The cavalry and artillery advanced supported by the infantry in quarter distance continuous columns until we got within range of their heavy guns from the opposite side."[39]

How correct is the description of the resistance by the Sikhs while crossing the river, such an eyewitness account we do not find anywhere else.

"The cavalry and artillery there advanced at smart trot towards the bank of the river, the Horse Artillery opening their fire on the batteries and troops on the opposite side and a brigade of Cavalry consisting of 14th Light Dragoons and 5th Bengal Cavalry supported by 3rd Light Dragooons charged Cavalry picques on the side of the river in the most gallant and impetuous manner. Unfortunately they did not perceive in a nullah from the clouds of dust and the excitement of the charge, between them and the hostile Cavalry filled with the Sikh Infantry laying down. The Two leading regiments charged right into it and suffered severely from the Infantry. After they got over that the Sikh Cavalry stood their charge, receiving the cuts from our Dragoons on the back where they wear a shield and turning and returning the cuts with great fury made a desperate resistance for some time and then fled across the river. Brigadier Coustan commanding the Cavalry and Col. Havelock commanding 14th Light Dragoons were killed, the first by a musket shot, the latter was last seen down with three Sikhs

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cutting at him and he is returned missing but there can be no doubt he was killed".[40] Alexander MecLeod paid compliment to the Sikh Cavalry during the battle of Ramnagar:

"Worst of all we lost a Horse Artillery 6 p. and ammunition wagon. They were too impetuous and the gun dropped over the bank of the river some distance from the water, (except in the rainy season) and they could not get it up. The Sikhs opened such a heavy fire on them they were obliged to leave it and the Sikh seized it and dragged it across to their side of the river much to the disgust of Lord Gough who was present".[41]

About Brigadier General Campbell's conduct in the battle of Chillianwala Col. MecLeod wrote:-

"Campbell led on our brigade in the most gallant and judicious manner and saved us many lives. We made several charges in the most heroic manner and captured 11 pieces of cannon and spiked 10 out of that number".[42]

"How we escaped so well is miracle to me."[43] At time he was very bitter about the Sikhs:-

"It is not safe being in rear as the Sikh rascals murder every one they can lay hold of."[44]

"We are not strong enough for the Sikhs. They our flanks and we are obliged to change positions frequently and on time a large body of their Cavalry got in our rear and we were obliged to face to the right about. They carried off some of the guns we spike."[45]

In the battle of Chillianiwala 24th Brigade suffered most. Col. MecLeod writes. N. 24th mere upward 1000 strong and I hear that they have 400 killed and wounded"[46]

Another place Col. MecLeod writes:-

"You will see Pennyquick's Brigade was on our right and when they were driven back with such dreadful loss, the post opposed to them tried to turn our right flank but you will see how we change to the Right in doing which the 36th N.I. broke and got into confusion in rear of our Right Wing. Their officers did everything to rally them and get them into order and several were cut down by the Sikhs in the ranks and you will observe Lord Gough mentions the distinguished conduct of Major M.....and officers of the 36th N.I. but nothing of the regiment."[47]

After Battle of Chillianwala Col. MecLeod was promoted as Brigadier. He writes about his movements on 21st Feb. 1849 the day when the battle of Gujrat was fought:

"At the outbreak of the day on the 21st the Generals and Brigadiers were again summoned to his Lordship's tent when he informed us (that) the Sikhs were still in the same position and more fully explained the plan of attack and that was to commence by General Gilbert's Division carrying a strong village on the right where they had 4 Regular Regiments and 12 guns and then the whole Army to advance in columns of Brigades at deploying distance till within range of the enemy's fire and then to deploy into a line."[48]

These letters are important for the writer and give minute details of his Brigade's movements and his personal comments over various mistakes of omission and commission on the part of General Gough but in sufficiently clear manner it gives the

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details of his strategy to prove that he was a good general. He has also paid him tribute in the following words:-

"His Lordship is a fine handsome, soldier like old fellow much liked by the Army. He is brave as a Lion, stick not at trifles and generous affable and warm hearted."[49]

About the British reverses after crossing the Chenab, MecLeod writes, "Despatches give the impression of disorderly retreat and guns thrown into well but this is not confirmed. We saw much of dead men and horses but nothing of any guns."[50]

II

In the history of the sub-continent of India, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was perhaps the only non-Muslim ruler who shared power with the Muslims. This is particularly significant for the Maharaja who belonged to the oppressed people – the people who had been persecuted not long ago. The contemporary Sikhs remembered the great *Ghallughara* – the bloody carnage of the Sikhs in 1762 where their fathers or grandfathers had been killed by Ahmad Shah Abdali during his *jehad* campaign. Two *jehads* waged against Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Syed Ahmad of Bareilly-both *jehads* were crushed. The Punjab Muslims were solidly behind Maharaja Ranjit Singh and they fought against *Jehadis*. The Muslims in general in Punjab remained loyal to Lahore Darbar and fought against the British in the Anglo-Sikh wars, shoulder to shoulder with the Sikhs.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh shared power with Muslims not only in political affairs, but also in military affairs. Faqir Aziz-ud-din was acting as Prime Minister and he was fully trusted by the Maharaja. When Dost Mohammad raised cry of *jehad* and collected huge army, Maharaja wanted to gain time to meet this challenge. He sent Faqir Aziz-ud-din to negotiate with Dost Mohammad. The former was successful to persuade Sultan Mohammad, brother of Dost Mohammad, to defect. With his defection, *jehadis* were dispersed and Ranjit Singh had bloodless victory. One of the most important forts Gobindgarh, Amritsar, where treasury of Maharaja was kept was given to Faqir Immam-ud-din. He was made incharge of the fort.

As far as military organisation was concerned, the Muslims had been employed in large numbers in the Regular Army of Ranjit Singh. Illahi Baksh was the Incharge of artillery. It is very significant to note that no war ammunition was imported. All types of cannons were manufactured in Punjab. East India Company published a book titled *Trophies of Sutlej Campaigns*. It gives pictures of various types of cannons with their names, dimensions with their particular names, names of manufacturers, etc. These manufacturers were mostly Muslims who prepared the war material for

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Ranjit Singh. Muslims in Punjab were fully satisfied during the reign of Maharaja. This was a new successful experiment in the Indian polity which is enviable even in modern times of Indian history.

It is often said that Maharaja Ranjit Singh followed the so-called secular policy or liberal policy. He followed this secular or liberal policy not due to the influence of western democracies. He was the product of Sikh movement and his policy of religious toleration was inspired by the Sikh Gurus' teachings. Guru Arjan had said:

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ ਤੂੰ
ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥

O God allow partakers of your grace.
You are alien to none. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 97

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ॥ਬਨਿ ਆਈ

None is our foe – we are in accord with all. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, not only a maker of History, he also contributed greatly to the writing of history. In creating new memorials and preservation of the old ones, Maharaja Ranjit Singh has done great service. He has made unique contribution in the history by preserving old monuments and memorials. He knew well that the memorials and monuments are likely to crumble down with the passage of time. When Phoola Singh fell fighting in the battle of Naushehra (1823 C.E.), Maharaja built his *Samadh*. It was known to him that Akali Phoola Singh was hated by *jehadis* and Afghans. No Afghan would have tolerated his memorial. Therefore, he gave long grant for its preservation with the result that it existed even if no Sikh is living in those areas. Whosoever is the occupant of the land, he has to spend money for its repairs, Maharaja treated all historic places in the same way. The historic gurdwaras in Punjab had been granted land for their maintenance, etc. All the gurdwaras in Nankana Sahib, *Janam Asthan*, Patti Sahib, Gurdwara Sacha Sauda at Chuharkhana had been given security by land grants for their maintenance. Similarly, Datta Ganj Baksh at Lahore, Jawalaji in Kangra were protected by land grants.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh proves to be the Bismarck in the Punjab State. Bismarck integrated various small states in Germany; similarly Ranjit Singh brought under one rule the scattered states of Punjab making Punjab a powerful province in the North West of India. Before the rise of Ranjit Singh, the Punjab was surrounded by powerful states intending to conquer various parts of Punjab. On the north-east, Gorkhas of Nepal wanted to have Kangra fort which was a very strong fort in that area. In the West, Afghans had been invading India for the last eight centuries. Initially, the Punjab was divided into various principalities. The parts of Punjab under the possession of Afghans were ruled by Afghans. Near Lahore, even the ancient capital of Punjab, Kasur, was in the Afghan State. Another powerful state was Multan which was also

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ruled by Afghans and there were number of principalities like Dera Gazi Khan, Attock, Derajat, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, etc., which were also under the Afghans control. Afghans were considered great warriors.

The central Punjab was occupied by various Sikh *Misls*. The most powerful *Misl* was Bhangi *Misl* which had occupied Lahore. Ramgharia, Ahluwalia, Kanahyia and Sukerchakia were the other most powerful *Misls*. Sukerchakia *Misl* was a small *Misl* founded by the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with its headquarters at Gujaranwala. In this way, the entire Punjab was divided into fragments ruled by different tribes. The most important were Afghans.

Adornment of Shri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar

Rare relics of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Period Preserved

Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not make his own residential palaces or centres of embellishment either at Lahore or Ram Bagh Amritsar, concentrated his efforts for the beautification of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

As it has been stated in one inscription in Gurmukhi on one of the doors of Darbar Sahib, Maharaja Ranjit Singh entrusted the work of decoration of the temple to Bhai Sant Singh Giani who belonged to Chiniot (modern District Jhang, now in Pakistan) and "stood in high favour of the Maharaja."[51] Because of his learning in Sikh theology, he was called Giani and was held in high esteem. He invited the Muslim artists of Chiniot who were famous in the art of decorating the walls with glazed colours.[52] They could not do fresco-painting. Therefore, a number of artists were employed. An important line of the artists whose work is still extant, belonged to Kehar Singh's family. The original name of Kehar Singh was Sher Singh. He enjoyed the royal patronage of the Maharaja. He had two nephews, namely, Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh.

Bishan excelled in both the arts – painting as well as fresco-painting. His paintings are extant above a window on western side of the first storey of the Golden Temple. These indicate a mingling of Iranian art with Punjabi culture. Above the central window of the eastern side in the same storey we find his name inscribed as "Bishan Singh Naqqash". He had two sons – Nihal Singh and Jawala Singh who followed in the footsteps of their father. Their work is also extant inside the Golden Temple.[53]

There are in all more than 300 different patterns of fresco-painting. These indicate a variety of richness in colourful representation of floral and zoological designs. The botanical and zoological symbols have been dexterously juxtaposed in as to convey an impression of organized integral whole.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also gold-plated the domes and the outer walls of Darbar Sahib. The entire work appears to have been completed by 1830 A.D. as it has been indicated in the gold-plated inscription in Gurmukhi characters on the main entrance

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of Sri Darbar Sahib:

> ".....the Gracious Guru through his kindness considering Sri Maharaja Singh Sahib Ranjit Singh as his dear disciple and servant got this work done by him, 1887 B.K." (1830 A.D.)[54]

In case we study the details of the expenditure incurred on this artistic project, we would come to know that the Maharaja showed great magnanimity in allowing his courtiers and associates to share the virtue of adorning the house of the Guru. According to Giani Gian Singh, two western domes of Darbar Sahib were gold-plated at the expense of Hukama Singh Chimni, (of Gujranwala), an important General of Ranjit Singh. Rest of the domes were gold-plated at the expenses of various Generals, Darbar Sahib came to be called the Golden Temple.

In 1833 A.D. under the supervision of Lehna Singh Majithia, marble stone was fixed in the inner *parikarma* of Darbar Sahib.[55] The Golden Temple is about 40½ feet square, and rests upon a platform of about 67 feet square. It is a two-storeyed marble structure which is like a piece of land rising from the centre of the tank (about 420 feet square) the only approach being by a causeway over 200 feet long. The lower half is decorated with white marble inlaid with precious and semiprecious stones – cornelian, serpentine, *lapis lazuli*. Over the main building rises a low flinted splendid dome in gold metal reflecting the rays of the sun while kiosks with flinted metal cupolas are attached at each corner. On the upper floor there is a small half of mirrors known as Shish Mahal.[56]

Not only Darbar Sahib, the Central Sikh Shrine, was decorated and repaired in the time of Ranjit Singh but also all the surrounding sacred shrines were either erected or given a facelift. The four uppermost storeys of Akal Bunga in front of Darbar Sahib were built by the order of Ranjit Singh. The expenses of its outer decoration and of the gold-plating of its dome were incurred by Hari Singh Nalwa, the famous General of the Maharaja.[57] Unfortunately, Akal Bunga or Akal Takht was brutally damaged during operation Blue Star 1984, and subsequently it has been replaced. The building of Baba Attal Rai was only a three-storeyed structure. Maharaja raised it to a nine-storeyed building indicating the age of Baba Attal at the time of his death. He also got gold-plated its dome. The expenses of the decoration work were met by different courtiers and chiefs whose details have been recorded by Giani Gian Singh.[58]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh and members of his family used to visit Darbar Sahib quite often. According to the custom they used to present something or the other, befitting each occasion. In the treasury of the Golden Temple, the following gifts presented by the members of the royal family have been preserved:

1. Four pairs of Gold-plated Doors: These are meant for the four doors of the Golden Temple. These are fitted on special occasions. On panels of the doors there are paintings

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on gold-plates.

2. Gold Umbrella beset with gems: It is made from twenty pounds of pure gold. At its top is a peacock of exquisite workmanship. The neck of the peacock is made of saphire, its beak holds a string of pearls, while the rest of the body is bedecked with precious stones.
3. String of Pearls: The string of pearls has got 108 pearls. One pearl is bigger than the rest. It is said that once Maharaja Sher Singh reached the Golden Temple earlier than his cashier. He had no cash to offer and he offered this string of pearls.
4. Jewel-bedecked Head-Band: This bridegroom's Sehra (head-band) had been prepared for the marriage of Prince Nau Nihal Singh, grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja presented it to the Golden Temple. It has thirty-five strings of pearls and its circumference contains 84 pure pearls.
5. A Canopy: It was made of rare, rich cloth with embroidery work in gold and silver. It had several frills made of strings of precious pearls of various hues. It was presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the then Nizam of Hyderabad (Deccan). The Maharaja subsequently presented it to the Golden Temple.[59] It was destroyed during Operation Blue Star in 1984.

Baren Charles Hugel visited the Golden Temple on Jan 26, 1836, and has given the following account in his *Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*.[60]

> "All Indian temples have something in them which appeals forcibly to the imagination, and the Hari Mandir is particularly mysterious and romantic in its character. It is surmounted by a golden roof, very beautifully and skillfully contrived, and is inlaid with marbel, a large door of gold opening into the temple, which is surrounded with little vestibules, the ceiling being supported by richly ornamented pillars. Before the entrance to the bridge are two large banners of red; on one is written, '*Wah: Guruji-ke Fatih*' in white letters; and on the other, the name of Ram Dass. These banners are from thirty to forty *ells* long, and are stretched on masts and confined with iron chains."

It appears essential to understand the word "secular" in Indian setting and its implications before applying it to a particular state of affairs, condition of government or attitude of any particular ruler or sovereign towards his subjects. Secular means temporal, profane, implying disassociation of religion from politics or not bound by monastic vows or rules. Its connotation is not of non-religious or irreligious as Maharaja Ranjit Singh was deeply religious. Maharaja Ranjit Singh disassociated religion from politics and he, therefore, deserves the epithet of secular in this sense of the word.

Before the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Punjab was governed by various Sikh chieftains, popularly known as *Misldars*. They used to decide their political matters in the religious assemblies, *Dewans*, held on the occasions of Diwali and Baisakhi at Golden Temple, Amritsar. Their famous organization, the Dal Khalsa, which offered stubborn resistance to the Afghan hordes under Ahmad Shah Abdali was brought into existence in the course of such assembly. This mode of deciding important political issues have been described as *Gurmatta* system which served as a unifying force and a

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central league in those days. They used to sink their differences on these solemn occasions and earnestly act upon the decision made at their holiest place in the presence of the Holy Granth. It may also be added here that Sardar Charhat Singh, the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, did not recruit any person in his army unless the person to be recruited had taken *Pahul* in the prescribed Sikh ceremony.

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh rose to power he delinked religion from politics. He entirely changed the mode of recruitment in the army and method of deciding political matters. During his reign, *Gurmatta* was held for the last time in 1805, when Holker came to the Punjab to seek help of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After 1805 all political matters including wars, relations with the English and with other chieftains – Hindu Rajas and Muslim Nawabs, were decided by the Maharaja on consultation with his ministers, who belonged to various religions. The religious assembly was never called upon to decide such matters as was done previously.

There was no religious persecution during the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Despite persecution of the Sikh for full one century on religious grounds at the hands of Muslim fanatics, there was no demolition of mosques or stoppage of *Azan* (morning call for prayers from a mosque). The Maharaja extended this patronage to all religions. His secular attitude can be judged from the complaint that *Azan* disturbed the morning sleep of the non-Muslims and they requested that it should be stopped by an order of the government. Maharaja shrewdly replied that he would join prayers. The non-Muslims realized the point involved in the condition and withdraw their request.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh inscribing the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh on his coins should not mislead the readers. The great rulers of India were averse to advertise their own names. Ashoka who was one of the greatest rulers of the world, did not inscribe his own name even on his edicts "sermons in stone" which have been found scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country. This indicates his humility. Similar is the case with Maharaja Ranjit Singh who did not inscribe his own name on his coins. He attributed his victories and political power to the blessings of the Gurus. He was fond of saying that Guru Gobind built a big drum and named it "Ranjit Nagara", i.e., "Drum of victory" and he too was no more than a drum of Guru Gobind Singh. This indicates his personal reverence for the Gurus whose teachings were not to discriminate against those who are not one's co-religionists. Also, as far as state affairs were concerned, he gave high offices, both civil and military, to persons belonging to different religions. Faqir Aziz-ud-din, Faqir Nur-ud-din, Dewan Mohkam Chand, Dewan Bhawani Das and Bhai Ram Singh continued to be his trusted officers.

The nature of the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh can never be called theocracy simply on the ground that he inscribed the names of the Gurus on his coins. Theocracy

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means a form of government in which God or deity is recognized as the king or immediate ruler and his laws as conveyed through particular religious book are taken as statutes of the Kingdom, these laws being used and administered by a priestly order as his ministers. Rule of Maharaja alleged to be a despotic rule by some, did not fulfill any one of the conditions to warrant the name of theocracy for his state. It is true that Ranjit Singh's empire was known as *Sarkar-i-Khalsa* but no laws were imposed on any of the minority or majority to adopt Sikh Religion.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh left behind seven sons, born from different wives, who had little fraternal affection for one another. Kharak Singh, born in March 1801, was of weak constitution and lacked discipline. He was inactive, being religiously inclined and addicted to opium and hard liqour. Brought up by servants, who pandered to his whims, he was unable to develop initiative.

Kanwar Naunihal Singh, son of Kharak Singh, possessed an ambitious and warlike spirit which qualified him thoroughly for the position to which he aspired. He was comparatively free from the vices, natural to his age and quite prevalent in his time. The Dogra Trio really dreaded him, as the Kanwar was the only person capable of controlling the power of Dhian Singh Dogra and his brothers. Unfortunately, Kharak Singh had quarreled violently with Dhian Singh Dogra, by ordering that he should not enjoy free admissions to the Palace. To counter Chet Singh Bajwa, Dhian Singh Dogra chose the path of treachery. Kanwar was forced to sideline his father and assume the Power. Even Kanwar stopped the Dogra to enter the *Zenana*. The tussle ensued which proved fatal to the power of the Maharaja families. Dogra Chief was paving the way for his own son to sit on the throne. Soon after the death of the Maharaja, the Kanwar had to suffer death and the Dogra chief brought Kanwar Sher Singh to succeed him.

Sher Singh was well conversant with the factions and groups in the Sikh Darbar. The council of Ministers and the nobility of the Darbar had already assumed unusually greater importance, in the absence of leadership from the Royal family. Sher Singh, though firmly established in his kingdom, paid little attention to affairs of the state which were left entirely in the hands of Dhian Singh Dogra. There was also no other prince who could preserve the state for long. Kashmira Singh, Pashaura Singh and Multana Singh were virtually kept at a distance from the Lahore Darbar, while Dalip Singh was about 10 months old when Maharaja Ranjit Singh had left for his heavenly abode. So the weak successors of the Lion of Punjab, at last, made the big Sikh Kingdom "red" on the political map within 10 years of the day the Lion departed.

Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh, both Dogras of Jammu, reached Lahore and with the assistance of Misr Diwan Chand, they succeeded in joining the service in the Sikh Kingdom in early 19th Century. They acquired all the requisite habits and manners of the Sikh Darbar within a few months. This was considered the most unlucky time for

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the Sikh Kingdom to have chosen and accepted the Dogras to join the service of the Maharaja. In 1818, the Maharaja sent for their younger brother Suchet Singh who immediately won for himself the regard of the Maharaja. Unfortunately, Gulab Singh Dogra managed to fill Maharaja's mind with distrust of Jamadar Khushal Singh *Deoridar.*

In the absence of leadership from the Royal family, the Council of Ministers and the nobility at the Darbar assumed unusually greater importance. The Dogras found it politic to play one claimant to the throne against the other. Two factions emerged soon after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The more influential were the Dogra brothers. Gulab Singh was later founder of Jammu & Kashmir State, Dhian Singh the Prime Minister, Suchet Singh an Army General, and Hira Singh Dogra, a great favourite of the late Maharaja. Opposed to them were the Sikh nobility – Sandhanwalias, Attariwalas and Majithias who were related closely to the Royal family. Sadly, each one had the desire to reduce the crown to a mere cipher and become the ruler of the country.

When Kharak Singh ascended the throne quietly in 1839, Dhian Singh Dogra wanted his son, Hira Singh Dogra, to snatch the throne to establish Dogra Raj in Punjab, but the Sikh Sardars were then fairly strong for his evil intentions, and he had to postpone the idea for sometime. Chet Singh Bajwa was acting as advisor of Maharaja Kharak Singh which was intolerable for the Dogras. The day came when Chet Singh Bajwa was mercilessly murdered before the eyes of Maharaja Kharak Singh.

Kanwar Naunihal Singh could not succeed to his father's throne as he was also put to death in a dramatic way, by arranging a fall of archway and then removing him to the Lahore Fort. Not allowing his Rani and mother to see him, that prince also left for his heavenly abode for no fault of his. Shortly thereafter, Rani Chand Kaur, widow of Maharaja Kharak Singh, was also put to death at the instance of the Dogras. Sher Singh became the Maharaja but he started negotiations with the Sandhawalias, disliked, the Dogras also started disliking the Maharaja. As planned by the Dogras, Maharaja Sher Singh was shot dead by Ajit Singh Sandhawalia in Shah Balawal and his son Kanwar Partap Singh by Lehna Singh in the nearby garden on September 15, 1843. Dhian Singh Dogra, who had given in writing to slay Maharaja Sher Singh, was also shot dead soon thereafter. Hira Singh Dogra sent army inside the Lahore fort and both the assailants of Maharaja Sher Singh, his Kanwar and Dhian Singh Dogra were also put to death.

As Hira Singh Dogra grew up, the army had also yielded its affection to this favourite of the late Maharaja. This senile love of the old Maharaja aided by the inclination of the all powerful army, suggested a dream of greatness to his uncles – the Dogra Brothers – and led to the successive deeds of violence to gratify their

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ambitious design; that Hira Singh Dogra might eventually succeed to the throne of the Sikh Maharaja, sweeping away in the bloodstream the surviving male members of the Maharaja's family, and all those Ministers, Advisors and Chiefs, not joining the Dogra party.

Misr Jallah, a tutor and guardian of Hira Singh Dogra was also playing his nasty games. He had established a reign of terror in the Kingdom of the Sikhs. An oral word from his tongue was implicitly obeyed from one end of the Kingdom to the other. Rani Jindan naturally felt slighted by an official of the Kingdom. When her brother, Jawahar Singh Aulakh, and the *sardars* and soldiers learnt about it, their rage against the Dogra Raja and the Misr knew no bounds. Resultantly, the Dogra and the Misr resolved to leave the city in pitch-dark, but their preparations and greed delayed them. On December 21, 1844, they loaded all the jewellery, cash and ornaments on elephants, with hundreds of horses and took flight. A hot chase by the Khalsa army saying "Slaughter the Pigs, don't let them go" did bear the fruit. Except six private soldiers, the whole party was cut to pieces. Thus ended the stormy ministry and the rule of the Dogra Prime Minister.

Gulab Singh Dogra was not happy when he learnt that Jawahar Singh Aulakh, brother of Maharani Jindan, had been installed the Prime Minister of the Sikh Kingdom. At his instance, Kanwar Pashaura Singh raised the banner of revolt against him but he could not succeed, as he was taken prisoner and was got murdered in the Attock Fort. Learning about the fate of the Kanwar, the Army brutally murdered the Prime Minister at the instance of the Dogra. Broadfoot was bent upon winning over the high-ups and chiefs of Lahore Darbar, and Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Tej Singh and Misr Lal Singh agreed to act as the agents and spies of the British Government. These enemies of the Khalsa started a War with the British and themselves shook their hands with them. First Anglo-Sikh War 1845-46 was forced upon the Khalsa by the Dogras and Misrs, and they then betrayed them. (For more detail see Chapter 24)

Anglo-Sikh Wars – 1845-46 & 1849

During the rule of the weak successors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, tumult and confusion were reigning in the Punjab and the attitude adopted by the British across the Sutlej was not pacific. Lord Ellenborough had fixed November 1845 as the month for the commencement of the War. He had worked for 6 years (1836-42) on the plan to annex the Sikh Kingdom and left India in expectation of his successor, Henry Hardinge, implementing his well-designed aggressive policy. Cordons around the Sikh Kingdom were placed by the British from the very olden days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Treaty of Amritsar (1809) was the first trap. In 1835, he had to keep his hands off from occupying Ferozepur which later on became a military cantonment for the

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British, acting as a pistol on the temple of the Maharaja. After the death of the Maharaja, the British longed for the annexation of the Sikh Kingdom on some pretext and they chose the nasty plan of 'Divide and Rule'. Military cantonments at Ambala, Kasauli, Simla, etc., were also founded. In September 1845, sixty large boats, fitted with guns, etc., and having a capacity of carrying 100 men in each boat were delivered at Ferozepur. Supply depots were also set up at different places. Pantoons were also collected near Ferozepur for transporting troops and military supplies. An island between Ferozepur and the Punjab, belonging to the Sikhs was unjustifiably occupied by the British. Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Tej Singh and Misr Lal Singh had agreed to act as agents and spies of the British Government. The Sikhs made no preparations or movements against the British beyond diplomatic protests. They did not indulge in any aggressive or warlike activity. The British forces attacked the Khalsa Kingdom and both the Misrs and the Dogras played their treacherous game. They helped the British openly. The Sikhs made greatest sacrifices at the battles of Mudki, Ferozeshah, Baddowal, Aliwal and Sabhraon, but lost the battles due to acts of the traitors, the details of which have been given in chapter 27. The British forces crossed the border and Gulab Singh Dogra was chosen to be compensated, as he was acceptable to the British for toeing the line of treachery to his masters. So all these measures were immediately carried into effect by Treaty dated March 9, 1846 and Agreement dated March 11, 1846 signed by helpless seven and half years old Maharaja Dalip Singh, besides Misrs Lal Singh, Tej Singh, and other associates of those traitors. Thereafter, Gulab Singh Dogra was declared Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir for his services to the British Government under Treaty of March 16, 1846. We must believe that the Punjab War of 1845-46 as Anglo-Sikh War named by the British was in reality the First War of Independence. This war broke the invincibility of the British army and proved that Indian soldiers, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, who jointly fought against the British, were no longer inferiors. They were the real bravos.

The condition of Punjab after the ratification of the Treaty of Lahore 1846, was like that of a patient who lay prostrate after intense bleeding and State needed fresh blood to revitalize its body politics. According to the terms of the Peace Treaty, the British troops were to be withdrawn at the close of that year. Under the guise of Guardianship, Lord Hardinge sought to tighten the British Grip on the Punjab and desired to carry on the Lahore Government in the name of the Maharaja during his minority, placing the British Minister at the head of the Government, meaning, the power of the British Agent was to be unlimited. Veiled threats, artful persuations, rewards and even bribes, however, failed to produce the desired result. The British then played a game and started withdrawing their army on which the Sikh chiefs piously succumbed to the Machiavellian tactics of the British and accepted the suicidal

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proposal. Treaty of Bharowal was concluded in December 1846 and Maharani Jindan, the Regent of the minor Maharaja, was the first who was taken prisoner and removed out of the Punjab to only cry and die in England as a virtual prisoner on August 1, 1863.

Diwan Mulraj, Governor of Multan, was sacked and the British arrived in Multan. *Dharamyudh* commenced. Battles were fought by the Khalsa with the British in which Attariwalas and other chiefs played the greatest role most faithfully. Gulab Singh Dogra, then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, sent ten thousand troops on the scene of War in Gujrat, to aid the British. The Sikh side at that moment, was weaker both in guns and in man-power. Yet, Sir J Thackwell wrote, "In this action as well as in Chillianwala, Sheikhs (Sikhs) caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and, closing with their adversary, dealt furious sword blows with their right. This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men.... The fidelity displayed by the Sikh gunners is worthy of record; the devotion with which they remained at their posts, when the atmosphere around them was absolutely fired by the British Guns, does not admit description." General Sir Charles Gough and Arthar Innes also wrote, "Throughout the campaign, the Sikh leaders had displayed higher qualities than in the Sutlej Campaign their followers had assuredly shown no falling off." After the disaster of Gujerat, the last battle placed the coping stone on the edifice of British Empire in India. The submission of the Sikhs to the British power was made complete.

The main aim of the British, even during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was to encircle the territory of the Maharaja, either by their own territory or by the territories of those who were subservient to their will so that they might conveniently walk into the Punjab whenever they chose to do so. Similar letters were written by Ellenborough to Duke of Wellington on Oct 26, 1841, May 11, 1843, and August 12, 1843. Henry Hardinge, in July 1844, proceeded to carry out the instructions of his masters, so the British proceeded to execute their final plan of annexation of the Punjab Kingdom and, when succeeded, Lord Dalhousie selected H M Elliot as his agent for the Final transaction of annexation, or more precisely, confiscation. On March 27, 1849, he sent Elliot to Lahore to announce the decision of the Governor General to the Maharaja and his people. However, Sir H M Lawrence and J Lawrence, refused to assist him. The Agent cleverly employed the more artful device of working separately on the personal interests of each member of the Council of Regency. Separate groups were contacted and managed to obtain their acceptance to the Terms cleverly. The signatures on the Fatal document that was prepared by Elliot beforehand thus put an end of the Independence of the Punjab and it seemed too late and useless to shed tears over the conduct of the British Agent, who faithfully performed his duty

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to the Crown. On March 29, 1849, at 7.00 a.m., Elliot held a Darbar at Lahore for the purpose of making known the decision of the Government of India. Accompanied by John Lawrence, Henry Lawrence and other officials of the Residency, he arrived at the Darbar Hall in the Lahore Fort. When the Maharaja arrived there alongwith the Ministers, he was conducted to a seat at the end of the Hall of audience. Amidst a deep silence, the Proclamation of the Annexation of the Punjab, the Fatal Edict as it was, was read aloud in English and, shortly thereafter, in Persian and Hindustani translation. The Fatal Edict was then handed over by Misr Tej Singh, the arch traitor, to the frightened child Maharaja, who affixed his signatures, by tracing the initials of his name in English letters. This farcical transaction formally and finally transformed the sovereign State of the Punjab into a British Province and its eleven and a half years old child ruler, Maharaja Dalip Singh, into a throneless pensioner of the British Government.

The Annexation made, in about ten years after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his foreboding turned out to be true and the Punjab, like the rest of India, came to be Painted Red on the political map of India. But who, amongst the British Statesmen, at that time, could imagine that, within a century, his people would also be forced to wind up their empire and 'Erase the red from the political map of Asia and Africa.' (for more detail see chapter 28)

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PART I

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1

POLITICAL CONDITION OF PUNJAB BEFORE THE RISE OF RANJIT SINGH

The capture and brutal execution of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 had left the Sikhs virtually without a leader and the despotic rulers of the time had started committing unprecedented crimes in the name of religion. For a long time, they had led the life of exiles with all its sufferings, which made them stronger than before, to fight the battle of freedom till they completely wiped out the enemy and established their supremacy. The condition of the Punjab, during those days of blood-shed and disorder, was miserable in the extreme. Waris Shah, the renowned author of the love-story of *Heer-Ranjha*, which had flourished during the turbulent period of history, had given in the epilogue of that poem, a vivid account of the state of the country:

"Fools and sinners give counsel to the World,
The words of the wise are set at naught,
No man tells the truth or cares for justice,
Telling what is untrue has become the practice in the World,
With violence men commit flagrant iniquity,
In the hands of tyrants there is a sharp sword,
There is no Governor, Ruler or Emperor,
The Country and all the people in it have been made desolate.
.....
The state of the noble is pitiable,
Men of menial birth flourish and the peasants are in great prosperity.
The Jats have become masters of our country,
Everywhere there is a new Government."

In the second half of the 18th century, Punjab was dominated by three political

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powers - Sikhs, Hindu Rajputs and Afghans. Since 1757, most part of the Punjab and Sind were under the influence of Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shah Abdali. He faced the rising power of Sikhs in Punjab. Taimur Shah, a local Governor was able to turn away Sikhs from Amritsar. He razed to the ground the fort of Ram Rauni, but this state of affairs did not last long and the Sikh misls joined hands and defeated Taimur Shah and his general Jahan Khan. Timur Shah Durani appears to have considered (very wisely) the Indus as his boundary and refused to involve himself in hostilities with the Sikhs. Endowed with a great deal of political sagacity, Timur Shah recognised (apparently) the futility of attempting to conquer again the Punjab — a task too difficult even for his father (Ahmad Shah Abdali). The ill-fated son, Shah Zaman, was lured by a vain glorious desire to emulate his grandfather's fame as the Champion of Islam.[1] The Afghans were forced to retreat and Lahore was occupied by the Sikhs in 1758. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia proclaimed sovereignty of Sikhs and became its head. He struck coins to commemorate his victory. Timur Shah died at Kabul on the 18th of May 1793 at the age of 47 years, after a reign of about 20 years.

In the Cis-Sutlej region there were over 40 big and small States. The Phulkian Misl, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kaithal and Karnal formed the dominant political powers in this area. Two external forces threatened the Cis-Sutlej region during the closing decades of the 18th Century. The first was Maratha, influence of which was beyond the Jamuna, and the second was Britisher under the command of George Thomas. The Maratha dominance came to end when they were defeated by Lord Lake at Delhi on September 11, 1803.[2]

In the Lower Himalayas, there existed a number of states, some ruled by Muslim rulers and some by the Hindu rulers. Akhnur, Bhimber, Khrikhariali, Kishtawar, Kotli, Punchh, Rajauri and Shakanrekha, Raisi and Shahpur were under Muslim rulers. Muslim states such as Kashmir, Peshawar and Multan were directly under the Kabul Government while states of Kasur, Bahawalpur, Malerkotla and Kunjpura owed allegiance to Kabul. Besides, the Awan of Pind Dadan Khan and Sahiwal, Baloch of Khushab, Bamba Kakka tribes of Muzaffarabad, Nawal of Bakkar Leih and Mankera, Chatha of Panthans of Rasulgarh, Gakkar of Jhelum-Rawalpindi region, Pirzadas of Pak Pattan, Sials of Jhang and Tiwana-Malaks of Shahpur were under Punjabi Muslim chiefs who were tributaries to Kabul. The states of Bahu, Basholi, Bahandralita (later called Ram Nagar). Bhadrawah, Bhoti, Dalpatpur, Jammu, Jasrota, Lakhanpur, Mankot (now called Ramkot), Samba, Trikot were the domains of Hindu rulers. These states existed between the rivers Ravi and Satluj. There were fourteen other states which existed between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej. There were Bhadu, Bahangal, Chamba Datarpur, Guler (also called Haripur). Jaswan, Kangra, Kotlila, Kulu, Kutlehar, Mandi, Nurpur, Siba and Suket.

Among the rulers of these states, Raja Sansar Chand, grandson of Ghumand Chand

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Katoch took possession of the strong fortress of the Kangra from the Kanahyia in 1785 and aspired to extend his kingdom from the mountainous region to the areas of Punjab. He did not relish the existing power, especially of Kanhayias and Sukerchakias.

Another element to dabble in the affairs of Punjab was the Gorkhas, who had become a formidable power in the eastern Himalayas under their very able leader Amar Singh Thapa. They eyed on the hill states and to achieve their objective, they moved westward along the mountain range, purportedly to subjugate the fort of Kangra. They had a two-fold purpose, either to annex territory of the hill states or take the Punjab and share the spoils in alliance with Sansar Chand. Disunity among the Punjabis made the latter alternative more feasible and more attractive.

The country of the Sikhs thus extended from Saharanpur on the East to the Attock on the West. Multan and Sind were the boundaries on the South, and Kote Kangra, Jammu and Bhember on the North. Each independent Sardar kept possession of his own territory, not encroaching that of his neighours. In some instances, some of the districts were divided between two Sardars and each received half the revenue of the whole.

Before Ranjit Singh, Multan Province was fragmented into a number of feuding principalities. Multan city itself and the adjacent countryside were controlled by a Pathan dynasty related to the Durrani monarchs of Afghanistan. After Ahmand Shah Abdali, most of the part of Multan remained under the control of Bhangis right from 1771 to 1779. But they could not conquer the Shujabad from its Governor Shuja Khan, who continued his administration until his death. His son Muzaffar Khan drove away the Bhangis from Multan after several attempts with the help of Taimur Shah. He remained master of Multan from 1779 to 1818 and was at first feudatory of the rulers of Kabul, became afterwards an independent prince.[4] Multan was an important place from the point of view of prosperity. It is situated in the centre of a hot, dusty plain in the foot of two of the Punjab's important rivers, the Sutlej and the Ravi, which supply it water for irrigation and carry merchandise between the Punjab and the sea. Since it was a prosperous agricultural and trading centre, beggars from poorer area flocked to it. It was one of the oldest cities in Punjab.[5] Ranjit Singh, who had begun his career as a comparatively minor *misldar* at the age of twelve in 1792, reduced the areas of Lahore and Amritsar. He was very much aware about the significance of Multan due to its floursing trade with Kabul and its famous silk manufactures.

During the reign of Zaman Shah, a grandson of Ahmad Shah Abadli, Ata Muhammad was the Governor of Kashmir. Zaman Shah became the Emperor of Kabul in 1800 and he gave place to Shah Mahmud on the throne of Kabul and the latter appointed his own governor of Kashmir. A struggle took place for the throne of Kabul between Shah Shuja and Shah Mahmud.

Miraculously, during the period, when they all had to undergo persecution at the

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hands of the Mughals and then Abdalis, the Sikhs had evolved the semi-military organisation, subsequently, called the *Misldari* system. Number of men from a clan, from a village or group of villages, or from one occupation, banded together under the leadership of the most daring, and formed small independent politico-military group, called *misl*, implying that they were confederacies of equals, under chiefs of their own selection. There were, earlier, some sixty five leaders, big or small. Quickly, the regrouping of the *Jathas* into twelve bigger ones was accomplished and Dal Khalsa or the National Army of the Panth had come into existence.

The Sikhs had virtually become masters of the whole of the then Punjab, as far west as Jehlum, while their possessions to the east extended to the plains of Karnal (now in Haryana). Those large *misls* were, namely:

1. Ahluwalia	2. Bhangi	3. Ramgarhia
4. Sukerchakia	5. Kanahyia	6. Nakai
7. Phulka	8. Nishanwalia	9. Karorsinghia
10. Dallewalia	11 Shaheedan	12.Faizullpuria (Singhpuria)

During the end of 18th Century Punjab, there were 68 territories between the Indus and Satluj - 25 Mughal States, 27 Hindu States, and 16 Sikh States. All were independent.[8] Most part between Jhelam and Sutlej was under the Sikh Misls. Bhangis occupied a long strip of territory along with river Jehlam held in possession the greater part of the districts of Gujrat, Sialkot, Lahore and Amritsar.[6] Wazirabad was under an independent Sikh chief, Jodh Singh and Gujranwala formed the centre of Sukerchakia Misl. Sialkot, Gujrat and across the river Jehlam including Pind-Dadan Khan and Miani were also under the control of Sukerchakia Misl. The land between Amritsar and Ludhiana was divided by various Sardars, the most important being the Kanhayias, with their seat at Batala in the Gurdaspur District and Ahluwalias with their centre at Kapurthala and their possessions reaching the vicinity of Jalandhar in one direction and embracing Hoshiarpur in the other.[7] Jalandhar itself, however, was in the control of a separate Sardar. The Ramgarhia and Kanahyia Misls shared the Bari Doab, and the latter also seized Kangra.

These Sikh *misls*, which had regained political ascendancy all these long years, were busy waging war against each other. The once powerful Bhangi *Misl*, connected with village Panjwar now in Tarn Taran district, had effectively ruled the central Punjab and even swept over the Indus and the Derajat country, then lay prone and inept and their kingdom had shattered to pieces. The Ramgarhias were at war with the Kanahyias who had occupied Batala, Kalanaur and the entire area to the south of Satluj from them. The Nakkais holding the territory of Sharkpur, Chunian, Kamalia and Kasur had also declined in power. Even the Nishanwalias, Fazullapurias

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(Singhapuria), Shaheedan, Karorsinghia and Dallewallias were reduced to non-entities. All these paved the way for the sudden rise of the Sukarchakias in the Punjab. The Ahluwalias and Kanahyias were already in active alliance with the Sukarchakias, the former in friendship and the latter in matrimony. But both these *misls* had come into clash with the Ramgharias, which resulted in the death of Gurbaksh Singh. The decline of the Kanahyia *misl* had then set in. The Ahluwalias had extensive influence in Jalandhar Doab on both sides of the Satluj. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia became a great friend of Ranjit Singh and had helped him rise to the political power in the Punjab. Beyond the Satluj river, Phulkian *misl* formed the dominant political power. Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Kaithal were the principal states. However, Karnal was held by Gajpat Singh, Thanesar by Bhanga Singh, Sirhind by Jassa Singh Thoka, Khanna by Saudh Singh, Buria by Hari Singh, Shahabad by Karam Singh, Mani Majra by Bhagat Singh, Kharar by Dhanna Singh, Nurmahal by Baghel Singh, Nakodar by Tara Singh Gheba, and Garshankar by Kasail Singh. The decline of these small chiefs had set in during the closing decades of the 18th century. Further reduction had occurred with the rise of the Sukarchakia *misl* to political power in the Punjab.

As time passed, Charat Singh, grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and a man of high aims, had not only laid the foundation of the greatness of the family, but had extended his estates which contributed materially to the Sikhs as a nation. The territory, left by him, on his death yielded about three lakhs of rupees annually and was inherited by the eldest son, Mahan Singh, then only ten years old. Raj Kaur, daughter of Charat Singh, was married to Sahib Singh Bhangi. Mai Desan, mother of Mahan Singh, assumed the charge of the affairs of the State, assisted by Jai Singh Kanahyia and soon rebuilt the fort at Gujranwala which had been destroyed by Ahmad Shah Abdali.

– Avtar Singh Gill

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

– ANCESTRY AND HIS PERIOD OF TUTELAGE –

The first Sukerchak person about whom we possess some knowledge was Takht Mal. He was a leading man of the village Sukerchak near Gujranwala.[1] He died in C.E. 1653, leaving two sons Balo and Bara.[2]

Bara was a devoted Sikh and always yearned for taking *Pahul.* But when he left for Amritsar to be baptized, he met with an accident and died (1679). His parting message to his son Budha was that he should not forget to receive *Pahul.*

Budha complied with his father's wish and took *Pahul* from the sacred hands of Guru Gobind Singh and was renamed Budh Singh. Budha was the first man of the family who adopted the Sikh religion.[3] He was courageous, enterprising and sagacious. Very soon he became famous in engineering attacks on his enemies. Singh means a lion, he was no less than one. On his body he had as many as forty scars of swords, spears and bullets. He is said to have fought the battles of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Singh Bahadur. Mohd Latif writes, "The mare on which Budha Singh used to ride was a piebald and was as famous in the counrty as its rider. People called this mare Desi; hence the nickname Desu gave to Budha Singh. It is said he swam across the Jhelum, the Ravi and Chinab fifty times on this mare."[4] He died of apoplexy in 1716. His wife was struck with grief and thrust a sword into her heart. The bodies of husband and wife were cremated together.

He was survived by his two sons, Naudh Singh and Chanda Singh, the latter being the ancestor of the Sandhawalias of Raja Sansi. Naudh Singh married the daughter of Gulab Singh, a landlord of Majitha and when his reputation increased, he built in his village Sukerchak[5] a big house of the shape of a small fortress. Shortly after, he raised a band of thirty horse and frequently forayed into the territories of the

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enemies of the Sikhs. He joined Faizalpuria *Misl* of Nawab Kapur Singh about the time of the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali. He and his men plundered the baggage of the invading army. He along with his brother Chanda Singh attacked Rasulnagar to punish its chief, Sultan Khan, who had forcibly converted Sikhs to Islam. He also moved fast against Shahab-ud-din of Ferozewala who had forcibly taken into his custody four innocent Sikhs and got their heads shaven. In the contest, he killed Shahab-ud-din and freed the Sikhs, enabling them to grow *kesas* and receive *Pahul.*

In 1749, Naudh Singh received a gun shot in his head while he challenged some Afghans who were intent upon ravaging non-Muslims. He left behind four sons, Charhat Singh, Dal Singh, Chet Singh and Mangat Singh.[6]

Charhat Singh was a spirited young man. When Misls were being organized, he founded a Misl of his own and called it after the name of his village Sukerchak to which he belonged. He shifted his headquarter from Raja Sansi (near Amritsar) where he had shifted from Sukerchak (because of intra-family dissensions) to Gujranwala.[7]

By 1752, he had gained large followers. He led his followers into Rachna Doab and occupied some of its territory. In 1756, he married the daughter of Amir Singh of Gujranwala. This marriage, according to Muhammad Latif, united the wealth and strength of two Sardars. Soon after, he embarked upon the career of conquest. The severe punishment he inflicted on the cruel governor of Emnabad endeared him to his people. His successful defence of Gujranwala against Khawaja Obed Khan of Lahore and his decisive victory over Nur-ud-Din Bamezai, further added to his glory.[8]

In the great Holocaust of 1762, Charhat Singh played a dominant role in opposing Ahmad Shah Abdali and his cohorts.

On the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali from Punjab, Charhat Singh occupied Wazirabad, Ahmadabad, and occupied Rohtas after defeating Nur-ud-Din Bomzai, a general of Ahmad Shah Abdali. He also occupied Dhanni, Chakhal and Jalalpur. He then subdued Pind Dadan Khan. Proceeding onwards, he conquered Kot Sahib Khan and Raja Ka Kot. He captured the salt mines of Khewra.[9]

In 1764, when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the seventh time, he was joined by Nasar Khan, a Baloch Chief of Kelat. In the battle at Lahore, the latter was strongly opposed by Charhat Singh and in the skirmish Baloch Chiefs' horse was shot dead. He also subdued Jhelum which he handed over to Dada Ram Singh.

After a while, Sarbuland Khan the paternal uncle of Ahmad Shah Abdali who retaining Kashmir, having relinquished the charge of governorship, was attacked by Charhat Singh in association with Gulab Singh Bhangi at Rohtas. Having busted the stout resistance from Sarbuland Khan, Charhat Singh made Sarbuland his captive. Charhat Singh in line with Sikh tenets that the fallen enemy should be treated nicely,

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showed much respect and courtesy to Sarbuland Khan.

Much impressed by the generosity of Charhat Singh, Sarbuland Khan offered to serve as governor under him if he proclaimed himself as king. Charhat Singh replied, "The kingship is already bestowed on us by the Guru. We want to keep you prisoner so that the world may know that Charhat Singh had captured the uncle of Ahmad Shah Abdali." But there is still greater name in releasing me, said Sarbuland Khan, they will say, "Charhat Singh captured uncle of Ahmad Shah Abdali and then let him free." The Khan paid two *lakh* rupees to the Sardar who allowed him to return to his country.

In a short period of fifteen years, Charhat Singh became the master of Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Ram Nagar, Sialkot, Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan and areas of Dhani and Pothohar.

Charhat Singh had on his administrative staff a number of efficient Sardars which included Dal Singh Gill, Bhag Singh Virk, Budh Singh, Gian Singh, Dharam Singh Batasa, Tahel Singh Chhachi, Nirmal Singh, Himmat Singh, Data Ram Singh and Sahaj Singh.[10] The Awans, Janjuas of Chebas, Alopals, Badialos, Jorras and Sagri Pathans of Mak had also accepted the over lordship of Charhat Singh.

His last foray was into Jammu where most of the wealthy families of the Punjab had sought shelter when Abdali began his invasions. The Bhangis disputed his right to plunder Jammu and, in one of his skirmishes, Charhat Singh fell mortally wounded by the bursting of his own matchlock. This event occurred in CE 1771.

The territory left by Charhat Singh on his death yielded about three lakhs of rupees annually and was inherited by his eldest son Mahan Singh.[11] Mahan Singh being too young to take upon himself the responsibility of governing the Misl, his mother Mai Desan assumed the charge of the Misl. She conducted the affairs of the Misl with great tact and ability. She married her daughter Raj Kaur with Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat and her son Mahan Singh with a daughter of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind. Through the matrimonial alliances, she was able to enlist the sympathies of Bhangis and Phulkians for her house. She also strengthened the fort of Gujranwala.

In 1780, Mahan Singh cut his "leading strings and took the field of the head of the Misl to follow in the footsteps of his father."[12] He led successful expedition against enemies of his Misl, such as Nur Mohammad Bomzai and Pir Muhammad Chatha of Rasul Nagar and regained Rohtas and Rasul Nagar. Some years later he conquered Alipore which he renamed Akal Garh. Next, he conquered Pindi Bhatian, Sahiwal and the Khel and Musa Khail. All these places belonged to Desa Singh Bhangi who being a debauch could offer no resistance. Next, he invaded Kotli in the neighbourhood of Sialkot, well known for the manufacture of matchlocks.

In 1782, he invaded Jammu and acquired immense booty. But Jai Singh Kanahyia

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was offended because Mahan Singh had promised to share the booty with him for his promised help. When in 1784, on Diwali day, he went to Jai Singh, he was insulted by the latter who spoke "go away, you Bhagatia (dancing boy) I do not want to listen to your sentimental talk.[13]

Mahan Singh was acutely chagrined and he invited Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Sansar Chand ruler of Kangra, both enemies of Kanahyia's Chief. The combined forces completely routed the Kanahyias in the battle fought near Achal Batala. Gurbaksh Singh, the only son of Jai Singh was killed and Jai Singh was effectually humbled. The widow of Gurbaksh Singh saved the situation for the Kanahyias. She got Mahan Singh agree to accept the hand of her daughter Mehtab Kaur for his son Ranjit Singh, a matrimonial alliance that played a key role in the rise of Ranjit Singh to power.

In 1790, Mahan Singh attacked Sodhra ruled by Sahib Singh Bhangi. While the siege was in progress, Mahan Singh was suddenly taken ill. Handing over the charge to his minor but promising son Ranjit Singh, he returned home to die soon afterwards in 1792.

James Browne estimated the military strength of Mahan Singh at 15000 horse and 5000 foot in Rachna Doab and Sind Sagar Doab. Imam-ud-din Hussain wrote in 1796, that Mahan Singh commanded about 22000 horse and foot.[14] According to C.H. Payne, Mahan Singh left to his son and successor a state beset with the dangers, but he bequeathed to him, at the same time, the qualities by which dangers are best overcome by courage, combined with natural genius for command and enterprise tempered by prudence and foresight.

The legacy which Mahan Singh left to young Ranjit Singh consisted of sizable estate in north western Punjab, a band of intrepid horse and matchlock men and an ambition that knew no bounds. He was born on Monday, 13 November 1780, at Gujranwala.[15]

His first name was Budh Singh which was changed to Ranjit Singh later on in commemoration of the victorious campaigns of his father. When he was a little child, he had a virulent attack of smallpox. After several days of despair, he triumphed over his disease but was left disfigured for life with the loss of the sight of his left eye.

According to Bute Shah, at the age of 6 he would often go out with other boys for swimming in the river Chenab and distribute among them whatever he had in terms of cash or kind. For his education, he was sent to Bhai Bhaga Singh at his *dharamsals* in Gujranwala. He was made to attend religious services at the gurdwara and hear the recitation of Guru Granth Sahib. Alongside elementary instruction in the tenets of the Sikh faith, he was influenced by the preaching of Brahmin priests who had insinuated themselves in the home of the Sikh aristocracy.

Those were the days of adventure and every youngman was expected to shoulder

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a musket in defense of his home and hearth, or for a career of a successful soldier. Ranjit Singh was no exception. He got training in musketry from Amir Singh. He accompanied his father on his expeditions and learnt the war craft under his guidance. It is said that he became so fond of martial art that on his father's death in 1790, he spent 20000 rounds of shot in a few days firing at marks.

Ranjit Singh had the first experience of a military campaign when he was ten. His father had demanded tribute from Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat and, in the latters' refusal, ejected him from his principality. Sahib Singh took refuge in the fort of Sodhra. Ranjit Singh laid siege to the fort. The siege dragged on through the winter months. Mahan Singh was suddently taken very ill and returned to Gujranwala, leaving behind Ranjit Singh to conduct the operations. When Bhangi Sardars, learnt of Mahan Singh's illness they hurried to the relief of Sodhra.

Ranjit Singh ambushed the Bhangi force coming from Lahore many miles away from Sodhra and routed it. Mahan Singh heard of his son's victory before he died. Ranjit Singh was able to get back to take part in his father's funeral.

Maharaja was too young and temperamental to bother about the management of the estate and let his father's confident, Lakhpat Rai, continue in chair. His mother had confidence in Lakhpat Rai's integrity, but her brother Dal Singh who wished to take administration in his own hands found an ally in Sada Kaur, Ranjit Singh's mother-in-law. The intrigues and counter intrigues that went on between mother, mother-in-law, uncle and other relations made Ranjit Singh sick of the atmosphere at home and he began to spend most of his time in hunting and in the company of servants. As much of his time was spent in chase, he learnt to ride and shoot well. To amuse himself and his friends he developed the habit of taking alcohol early in life.

About this time two important incidents happened. Assault was made on Ranjit Singh during one of his hunting expeditions. When he was away from his entourage, Hashmat Khan, a chief who had suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of his father, attacked him. The blow went amiss and cut only the belt of Ranjit Singh. Before Hashmat Khan could make second move, Ranjit Singh transfixed him with his lance: he cut off his enemy's head and rode back to his party with the gory trophy impaled on his spear. He was then hardly thirteen.

Ranjit Singh was just over fifteen years, when his mother married him to Mehtab Kaur, the daughter of Sada Kaur and her husband late Gurbaksh Singh. The matrimonial alliance of two important families was a major event for the Punjab. All the leading Sikh chiefs were present at the wedding which took place at Batala, the headquarter of Kanahiya Misl.

The marriage was not a happy one. It is not unlikely that Mehtab Kaur felt somewhat hesitant in giving her affection to a man who had slain her father. Sada

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Kaur was not particularly disturbed at this because her ulterior motive in contracting this alliance was to promote the interests of her Misl by making use of Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh, fully aware of this, took more interest in consolidating his own power than making attempts to win his wife's affections, although he never openly expressed his aversion for her.

According to Khushwant Singh, "Instead of trying to win affections, he began to commend loyalties - which he could only do by becoming powerful." The Kanhyias thus became means towards this end. A curious love-hate relationship developed, between Sada Kaur and Ranjit Singh both of them were ambitious and respected each other's ambition. They could be unscrupulous and consequently willing to overlook the other's lack of scruple; in short, being very much alike, they began to understand each other perfectly.

Early in 1798, Ranjit Singh took a second wife who was the sister of Nakkai Sardar. The marriage proved to be more successful than the first. The new wife's name was the same as his mother, Raj Kaur and she had the same maternal gentleness and understanding in dealing with the wayward husband. Many other women came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's life, but for no one did he have greater respect than for Raj Kaur (renouned Datar Kaur) but affectionately known as Mai Nakkain.

Ranjit Singh respected her immensely. Mehtab Kaur was pained at Ranjit Singh's polygamous demeanour and returned to Batala and thereafter she occasionally made visit to her husband's home.

Simultaneous to all this, Ranjit Signh noted that the management of Sukerchak estate had reached a critical stage, mainly because of the friction between Lakhpat Rai and his uncle Dal Singh. Lakhpat Rai was murdered while collecting revenue. The murderers could not be identified, but ugly rumour spread that Dal Singh had a hand in the killing. Ranjit Singh felt that the time had come to assume the administration into his own hands. At the age of seventeen, Ranjit Singh became the master of his Sukerchak estate.

– (Principal) Surjit Singh Gandhi

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15. According to Munshi Sohan Lal and Diwan Amarnath, Maharaja Ranjit Singh born on 3 Magh Sambat 1837 Bikrami, Monday corresponding of November 13, 1780 as the date of the birth of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The statement of Syed Mohammad Latif as also of Princep that Ranjit Singh's age at that time was twelve years, is not correct.
16. Some writers accuse Maharaja Ranjit Singh having killed his mother with his own hands. Princep says Ranjit Singh approved it, but Khushwaqt Rai, Sohan Lal, Amarnath and Bute Shah do not approve it. Khushwaqt Rai wrote his book in 1811 A.D. and he was not in service of Ranjit Singh. Bute Shah was an employee of British Government at Ludhiana. He says that Ranjit Singh took charge of his *misl* after consultation with her mother. Sita Ram Kohli considers the charge entirely false and baseless. In his view, attribution of matricide to Ranjit Singh is entirely unfair and seems to be an attempt to degrade Ranjit Singh.

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CONQUESTS, CONSOLIDATION & INTEGRATION

From the point of extension of Sikh Power, the Sikh *Misl* system had worked well for a generation. The Sikh Power had spread to the Northwest as far as Attock on the Indus River and in the east upto the Western Bank of Ganga. But soon after the conquest of Sirhind in 1764, the Misls fell prey to mutual rivalry and jealously ending in anarchy. The *sardars/misldars* paid scant respect to *Gurmatta* and took casually the meetings of *Sarbat Khalsa*. Almost all of them preferred to establish individualistic states on the model of Delhi kingdom. Such a state of disorder lasted for so long because there was absence of a ruler who, through his political insight, physical valour and thoughtful planning, could unify heterogeneous material. George Foster recorded in his travelogue shortly after the birth of Ranjit Singh, "should any future call forth the combined efforts of the Sieques to maintain the existence of the empire and religion, we may see some ambitious chief led on by his genius and success and absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of commonwealth, the standard of monarchy.... Under such a form of government, I have little hesitation in saying that the Sieques should be soon advanced to the first rank amongst the native Princes of Hindustan and should become a terror to the surrounding states (p. 340)." Such a person did emerge in the form of Ranjit Singh who possessed great ability, strong resolution, high quality leadership, and shrewdness.

Mahan Singh died in 1792 when Ranjit Singh was only 12 years old. Since, Ranjit Singh had accompanied his father in some of his campaigns, he had perceived for himself, his intrepidity, boldness and skill in diplomacy and his political demeanor. According to Hari Ram Gupta, Mahan Singh followed the example of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind state who along with Phulkian chiefs of Patiala and Nabha had established individualistic, independent principalities on the pattern of Delhi Kingdom.[1] He

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therefore treated all the chiefs under him not as his equals, as it was a rule in Misls but as subordinates. They were paid fixed salaries and occasional rewards by way of appreciation for some deeds of extraordinary nature. Apart from inheriting patrimony consisting of valued kingdom, the prestige of his father and grandfather, Ranjit Singh's own role exhibited in battles in which he took part at the best of his father, greatly increased his popularity and prestige among both the people of Punjab as well as among the *Misldars.*

Shah Zaman, the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali and son of Taimur Shah attacked Punjab four times, one after another in 1793, 1795, 1796, 1798-99. Except in 1793, Ranjit Singh's role was crucial. When Shah Zaman attacked for the fourth time, the majority of the *sardars* hesitated to join Ranjit Singh in his efforts to checkmate Durrani forces, despite his repeated requests to them to side with him. In this context, Sada Kaur re-approached them saying, "If you are disposed to assist Ranjit Singh's advance and join him, if not, throw off that dress and take mine. Give me your clothes and I will march against the enemy." Ranjit Singh himself came to Amritsar and said to the Sikh *sardars,* victory is the gift of God, let us make an effort to oppose the invader. Some of the *sardars* did respond to him positively and he fought a grim battle with the Afghans forcing them to wheel back to Lahore. In January 1797, when the Shah got information that his brother Mehmud was organizing a rebellion in Afghanistan, he left his general, Sahanchi Khan with 12,000 soldiers in Lahore and took the road back to Kabul.

The Sikhs followed the Shah all the way across Jhelum and deprived him of much of his baggage. Sahanchi Khan thought this is a good chance to take the returning Sikhs by surprise and intercepted them at Ram Nagar. The Sikhs turned the tables on Sahanchi Khan and completely routed him. In that winter, Ranjit Singh's reputation rose from obscure Sikh chieftain to the hero of the Punjab. The humiliation of defeat rankled in the Afghan's mind. As soon as the Shah settled the domestic problem, he marched along a huge force to subdue the Sikhs who had inflicted defeat on Afghan forces. Finding the Afghan forces marching to Punjab, people were panicked and began to leave their houses and seek refuge in the hills. Almost all the big cities were deserted. At the meeting of Sarbat Khalsa at Amritsar, the majority were for fleeing to the hills. At this critical juncture, Sada Kaur, the mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh and Ranjit Singh himself made an impassioned appeal. The holy city of Amritsar should not be left to the mercies of Afghans who had made destruction of the Shrine, a point of honor. The appeal worked. Ranjit Singh was again chosen to be the leader. Shah sent a detachment of Afghan forces toward Amritsar. Ranjit Singh came five miles out of the city and after an encounter lasting over three hours, forced the Afghans to retreat to Lahore. He pursued them until they reached Lahore. He followed and

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encircled Lahore. He rode up to Summanburj (in Octagonal Tower of Lahore Fort on the side of River Ravi) where Shah Zaman was holding Court and yelled out a challenge to the Afghan: "Oh grandson of Abdali, come down and measure the sword of grandson of Charhat Singh." Bewildered Shah Zaman had to give up talk of war and of exterminating the Sikhs. Now, he resorted to cunning. He started negotiation, his purpose being to sow discord among the Sikhs or to win over their allegiance on his own terms, but he did not succeed. Sikh *sardars* snapped negotiation and declared that "they had taken the country by sword and would preserve it by force." The Shah had to retrace his steps to his country swearing that he would teach the Sikhs a lesson.

When the news of Shah Zaman's departure reached the Sikh Chieftains, they left Amritsar and headed back to their respective estates. The only one who set out in pursuit and caught up with the Afghan rear not far from Gujranwala was Ranjit Singh. From here to the bank of Jhelum he kept up a running fight, taking heavy toll of the invaders' life and equipment.

The people of India now heard of the new leader who had risen in the Punjab. Ranjit Singh's popularity was at its height as it was gauged by Resident Collins. He wrote: "At present this Chief is regarded throughout Hindustan as the Protector of the Sikh Nation; it being generally believed that were it not for the fortitude and excellent conduct of Ranjit Singh, the whole of Punjab, err this has become a desert post since it is the boast of these northern savages, i.e., Afghans that the "grass never grows where horses have once trodden."[2]

Just when Shah and his troops were crossing the River Jhelum, there was a heavy rain and his guns were swept away to the mid current. All these guns were badly needed in his campaign to quell rebels in Afghanistan. He therefore sent a *marasla* (letter) under his own signature to Ranjit Singh, requesting him to extricate his guns from the river at the earliest and send them to Peshawar. In lieu thereof, he promised to accord Governorship of Province Lahore (Subehdari Sultanate Lahore Bash Uma Marahmat Farmuda). Ranjit Singh dragged eight out of twelve guns from the river and sent them to Peshawar. The remaining four guns he could not draw because they had sunk deeper.[3] The Shah sent a *Khilat* for Ranjit Singh in recognition of his service with a *Farman* permitting him to occupy Lahore. It was for the first time that Durrani rule of Afghanistan since Ahmed Shah Durrani had accepted a non-Durrani and non-Muslim as co-sharer of Durrani prestige and power.[4]

Basking under glory, Ranjit Singh now set himself seriously to consummate his ambition to be the sovereign of whole Punjab – the ambition which sprang partly because of the disturbed political condition of the Punjab and partly because of the belief among Khalsa Brotherhood that sovereignty in Punjab was their destiny as foretold by Guru Gobind Singh. On the retreat of Afghan Army, Lahore was re-

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occupied by the three Chieftains – Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh.[5] All of them spent their time in drinking, frolicking or in squabbling among themselves, disturbing the people. Sohan Lal, the author of *Umad-ut-Twarikh* writes: "the people of Lahore, being extremely oppressed, could not help crying in desperation and prayed to God for their redemption. Among them were all, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, etc."

During a meeting of the people, the Ruler of Kasur who had been cherishing for a long time the dream of possessing Governorship of Lahore and to establish Pathan paramountcy in collaboration with the Ruler of Afghanistan approached the leading Muslims of Lahore with the suggestion that their master (Shah Zaman) be invited to take over the city. But the Muslims spurned his overtures and hand in hand with the Hindu and Sikh citizens sent a secret invitation to Ranjit Singh to come and occupy the Fort. This happened 26 days after Shah Zaman's retreat.[6] According to Mohammad Latif, the main signatories on the petition were Hakim Hatim Rai, Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh, Mian Ashak Mohd. Mian Mohkam Din, Mian Bakar, Mohd. Tahir, Mofti Mohd. Mukarrar and Mia Shad.[7] The petition was dissipated without any loss of time because it was rumoured that Shah Zaman was about to attack Lahore. Ranjit Singh, on receiving the petition, dispatched his trusted servant, Abdur Rehman, to study and report about the feelings of the people of Lahore. He himself went to Batala to consult his mother-in-law. Abdur Rehman stayed in Lahore for some days and met Ranjit Singh at Batala to present his report personally. From the report Ranjit Singh concluded that the situation was ripe for him to act. The *sardars* in occupation of Lahore were not in a position to put up any substantial resistance. Ranjit Singh, along with Sada Kaur marched to Amritsar at the head of strong force of 25,000, pretending that he was on a usual visit to the Holy City. From Amritsar, in one march, he reached suburbs of Lahore.

Ranjit Singh left Sada Kaur at the Delhi Gate on the eastern side and himself went on to Anarkali in the south. There he was handed over a secret message of welcome from the citizens of Lahore. He rode around the city wall and had it mined at several places. As soon as the first breach was blown, Mehar Mokham Din, leader of Lahore Muslims, declared that he had taken the administration of the city in his own hands in obedience of the order of Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh entered with his detachment through the Lahori Gate in the South. Sada Kaur led in her horsemen through Delhi Gate in the East. Mohar Singh and Sahib Singh's families and their retainer fled through other gates. Chet Singh shut himself up in the Lahore Fort. Finding his position helpless, Chet Singh's envoys came out and offered the Fort to Ranjit Singh if his master's life was spared. Ranjit Singh agreed. Soon after Chet Singh threw open the gates of the fort. He was treated respectfully and granted a big *jagir*. "Trumpets of happiness were blown and battle

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drums of victory beaten in every direction", wrote Sohan Lal. [8]

Lahore city was the chief city of the Punjab and a sort of 'half-way-house' between the Indian capital and the territory beyond north-west and frontier of India from where the Muslim rulers recruited their best fighters. For the Sikhs, it was only second in importance to Amritsar. It was the birthplace of their fourth Guru Ramdas and the site of martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev.

The possession of the city made Ranjit Singh the most powerful chieftain in Northern India and since it was known to have always been the Capital of the province, the impression spread that Ranjit Singh had established his hegemony over the rest of Punjab.

Battle of Bhasin (1800 CE)

Ranjit Singh's occupation of Lahore gave a rude shock not only to some important Sikh chiefs but also to the Nizamuddin of Kasur, who had once already offered to Shah Zaman to hold the Punjab for him and to pay him Rs. 5 *lacs* per annum as tribute. Sahib Singh of Gujarat, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Jodh Singh of Wazirabad made alliance with Bhangi Chieftains who had been ignonimously ejected from the city of Lahore.[9] They met at Amritsar where a branch of Bhangi was in power and resolved to eject Ranjit Singh from Lahore. In the spring of 1800, the combined forces under the leadership of Gulab Singh Bhangi advanced to Lahore.[10] Ranjit Singh stopped their progress 10 miles east of Lahore at the village of Bhasin. For about two months, none could dare to launch attack. In the meantime, Gulab Singh died because of excessive indulgence in wine, causing acute disappointment among the confederates so much so that they decided to wind up and retrace to their estates.[11] The Chiefs never again dared to challenge the rising star. Ranjit Singh now became undisputed Lord of Lahore.

On the first of Baisakh, 12th April 1801, Sahib Singh Bedi daubed Ranjit Singh's forehead with saffron paste and proclaimed him Maharaja of Punjab.[12] In this context Dr. Khushwant Singh remarks: "Ranjit Singh did not derive the title from either of Mughals or Afghans, it was given to him by that mystic entity, the Panth Khalsaji. He acknowledged no earthly power. He was impelled by the weight of tradition that had grown over the years, that it was the destiny of the Sikh Rule (*Raj Karega Khalsa*) and that perhaps he had been chosen by the Guru to be the instrument of that inscrutable design." With this assurance, Ranjit Singh proceeded further on a career of conquest and annexation.

Gordon in his dissertation 'The Sikhs' observed that "After going through the Hindu equivalent of coronation ceremony, he claimed that, he was now to be styled Sarkar, signifying power and State and, in token of sovereignty, he established the mint and issued a coin bearing inscription: '*Deg-o-Teg Fateh Nusrat Bedrang Yaft Az*

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Nanak Guru Gobind Singh' (couldron *(deg)* signifying generosity, sword (*teg*) signifying power and unhindered victory from Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh).[13]

Before attempting to deal with his enemies who had encamped at Bhasin, Ranjit Singh decided to occupy smaller states. He invaded Jammu. The ruler of this state made peace by paying a sum of Rs. 20 thousand and accepting status of a feudatory. On the way, Ranjit Singh conquered Miroval and Naroval. Dal Singh, the chief of Akal Garh, who in alliance with Sahib Singh of Gujarat was conspiring against Ranjit Singh, was next defeated and taken prisoner. He was released shortly thereafter on the mediation of a holy man, Baba Keshra Singh. Not much later he died. Ranjit Singh annexed his estate. Next, Ranjit Singh blasted the power of Sahib Singh of Gujarat, but because of the mediation of certain responsible persons he deferred the annexation of his territory. But when after some time he, in alliance with Nizam-ud-din of Kasur started conspiring against him, he sent an expedition under the command of Fateh Singh Kaliawala. Nizam-ud-din could save himself by sending his son Kutb-ud-din, Raja Khan and Vasil Khan as hostages to the Maharaja. Sahib Singh, however, escaped somehow but in 1809 he was finally defeated by Lahore forces and his estates were annexed.

Next came the turn of Sansar Chand Katoch, the ruler of Kangra. He had anticipated trouble and took offensive and occupied quite a number of villages of the estate of Sada Kaur. He was assisted by Raja of Nurpur. When Ranjit Singh turned up at Batala the Raja of Nurpur fled to his county.[14] Sansar Chand lost his courage and withdrew his forces. Ranjit Singh re-occupied villages taken by Sansar Chand and annexed in addition some of Sansar Chand's territory including Naushehra and Nurpur which he gave to Sada Kaur.

On his return from the hills, Ranjit Singh occupied the fort of Sujanpur near Pathankot, then held by Budh Singh and Sangat Singh. Ranjit Singh established his post at Sujanpur. The neighboring territory of Dharamkot and Behrampur were also captured.[15] On the way back to Lahore, Ranjit Singh stopped at Tarn Taran to have a dip in the sacred waters of the tank of Tarn Taran. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia who had been invited earlier by Ranjit Singh, joined same in full view of thousands of businessmen and *sardars* who had congregated. Ranjit Singh and Ahluwalia exchanged turbans as a symbolic gesture of having become brothers-in-faith (*dharam bhai*). They signed a solemn pledge in front of Guru Granth Sahib that thereafter their friends and enemies would be common. They would visit each other as frequently as possible and in every conquest made by their mutual effort, Ranjit Singh would give at least one district to Fateh Singh. The contracting of friendship with Ahluwalia was a political master stroke. He had already established alliances with Kanahyia and Nakkai *Misls* through marriages. Now by entering into friendship with Ahluwalia, he made sure of utilizing his prestige and resources to advance his own interests.

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Now to be subdued was Jassa Singh Doloo of Chinnot, the son of Sardar Dharam Singh, who had been an ally of the Bhangi and, according to Sohan Lal, was hot-headed atrocious in his behavior. Doloo kept the besieger at bay for two months and ultimately submitted thereafter. Ranjit Singh admired his grit and was pleased to take him in his service.

The combined forces of Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh marched against Kasur ruler, Nizamuddin, who had plundered some of the villages around Lahore while Ranjit Singh was away to Chinnot. A pitched battle took place. The Lion of Punjab himself led the assault with a sword in his hand and resorted to general massacre of Afghan *jehadi*, whom Nizam-ud-din had specially invited. Nizam-ud-din was constrained to pay a heavy amount as penalty in addition to expenses of war. Soon after, Ranjit Singh proceeded to Phagwara and ejected widow of Chuharr Mal. The territory was handed over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia.

In the beginning of the year 1803, the Maharaja proceeded to Multan whose ruler, Muzaffar Khan, had shown inclination to the ruler of Afghanistan. Multan had been taken by Bhangi Sardar more than once but because of their indifference to the welfare of the people, particularly the Muslims, they could not retain their hold on it. Ranjit Singh was determined to reclaim Multan and early in 1803, he marched towards the city. But many of his *sardars* advised him against undertaking the expedition because they thought that they were not yet in a position to storm the fort of Multan. Nothing, however, could deter Ranjit Singh from marching out of Lahore. Muzaffar Khan did arouse the peasantry to come to back his bid but finding himself unable to resist Ranjit Singh, he thought it discrete enough to make his submission. He paid an indemnity and agreed to pay the same amount of revenue to him which he had committed to pay to the ruler of Kabul. After this, Ranjit Singh made his presence felt in Sahiwal. His next target was Ahmed Khan of Jhang, who was suspected to be in league with the Afghan ruler whom he regularly sent report regarding the activities of Ranjit Singh. After a stiff resistance, Ahmed Khan submitted. He snapped his relation to the ruler of Afghanistan and agreed to pay a heavy amount as indemnity.

Ranjit Singh now advanced in the north-west upto Rawalpindi and realized tributes from the Bars of Karlan and Kathia between Ravi and Chenab and Bars of Sahiwal between Chenab and Jhelum.

Occupation of Amritsar

The most important of the conquests after Lahore was that of Amritsar, Punjab's second largest city commercially more important than Lahore. For the Sikhs, it was the most important city in the world. Anyone who aspired to be the leader of the Sikhs and the Maharaja of the Punjab had to take Amritsar to make good his title.

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According to Lepel Griffin, Cunningham and Mohammad Latif, Ranjit Singh conquered Amritsar in 1802, but the more reliable account of Sohan Lal who wrote the diary of Ranjit Singh's Durbar, says that Amritsar was conquered in 1805.

Amritsar was divided between nearly a dozen families owning different parts of the city, each jealous of the other, which maintained retinues of armed tax collectors, who squeezed traders and shopkeepers as often as they could. People in general were weary of brawls in the street. The only family of real importance was that of Mai Sukhan, widow of Bhangi chief, Gulab Singh. The woman looked after her minor son Gurdit Singh and also the administrative affairs. The combined forces of Ranjit Singh, Sada Kaur and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia encircled Amritsar. Sardar mounted cannons on their fortresses. Mai Sukhan also stayed to resist, hoping Ramgarhias would come to her rescue. Ranjit Singh took the city piecemeal. Ramgarhias did not come. Mai Sukhan surrendered. Ranjit Singh granted pension for her and her son. Ranjit Singh occupied the fort of Gobindgarh and with that acquired 5 cannons, including the massive *Zamzam* made of copper and brass, which had caused havoc among the ranks of Marathas in the Battle of Panipat. The Bhangis had taken it from the Afghans and since then it was known as '*Bhangian Di Top*'.[16] By 1805, Ranjit Singh's prestige had sky-rocketed and he was strong enough to play more aggressive. But he was suddenly diverted towards the East, where the English were trying to make their presence felt. As a result, he had to slow down his violent activities for the time being.

Circumstances changed soon after 1807 and more particularly after 1809. The Treaty of Amritsar between the English and Ranjit Singh was signed and the Maharaja again resorted to the policy of acquisitions and annexation.

Annexation of Kasur

In the early part of the year 1807, the Maharaja was called upon to take action against Kasur. Nizam-ud-din who had been the ruler of Kasur, had been assassinated and his brother Kutbuddin had assumed the reigns of Government. He was eager to strike a blow to the rising power of the Maharaja. To his purpose he enlisted a large number of Ghazis, fortified Kasur and stocked the fort with provisions, to outlast a prolonged siege. Besides, he adopted the policy of persecution of the Sikhs, giving impression to Muslims that he was organizing *jehad* against the Sikh infidels. He also entered into conspiracy with Muzaffar Khan[17] who promised to supply him soldiers and war material. Ranjit Singh sent his trusted adviser, Aziz-ud-din to tell Pathan that the time of religious crusade was over and he should avoid confrontation. Kutbuddin dismissed Azizuddin with the taunt that the Faqir ate the salt of infidels and he was unworthy of attention.[18] On hearing this Ranjit Singh flew into rage and immediately led his army himself to punish Kutbuddin.[19] The band of *Nihangs* led by Akali Phoola

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Singh also accompanied him. The battle started in the morning of 10th February 1807 with a clash between the Ghazis and Nihangs – Muslim crusaders versus Sikhs. The Nihangs drove the Ghazis between the stockades. The Nawab fled the battlefield along with Ghazis and shut himself in the fort. For a month, Sikh guns fired on the Kasur fort without making any impression. One night a mine was laid beneath the wall of the fort with the bursting of which the wall was breached. Khalsa forces entered the fort and after a bloody hand-to-hand fight occupied it. Kutb-ud-din was arrested and brought before Maharaja. The Maharaja showed magnanimity. Kutb-ud-din was forgiven and granted a handsome *jagir* across the Sutlej at Mamdot. The whole of the area of Kasur kingdom was annexed to Maharaja's territory.

Early in 1809, the Maharaja set out to subdue hill states. The chiefs of Pathankot, Jasrota and Chamba readily accepted his overlordship and in token thereof agreed to pay annual tributes.

Kangra's Conquest

Kangra's conquest was indispensable if Ranjit Singh was to dominate the Hill States between Sutlej and Ravi. Sansar Chand, a Rajput ruler of Kangra, even after receiving drubbing from Ranjit Singh when he captured a few of the territories of Sada Kaur, did not cease to aspire for extending his domain and if possible even to establish his hegemony over certain parts of the Punjab. He attacked the ruler of Kahlur who lost no time to appeal to the ruler of Nepal to help him in his adversity. Nepal's ruler responded affirmatively.

The Gorkhas of Nepal defeated Sansar Chand at Mehal Mari and pressed on to Kangra. Sansar Chand appealed both to the English and Ranjit Singh for help. The Gorkhas also approached the British and Ranjit Singh for assistance. The British turned down Gorkha's request on the ground that by the Treaty of Amritsar, they could not interfere with the affairs of the people living in the west of Sutlej. Lahore Durbar too rejected the overtures of Gorkhas because it considered Kangra as a part of Punjab and would feel obliged to defend it against all outsiders. Sansar Chand's request was favorably received but it was considered necessary that Sansar Chand first declared his territory as part of Punjab and surrender the fort of Kangra to the Durbar troops. Sansar Chand agreed to the proposal and as a guarantee of good faith delivered his son Aniradh Chand as hostage. Ranjit Singh reached Kangra and demanded entry into the fort. Sansar Chand prevaricated and told that he would hand over the fort as soon as Gorkhas withdrew. Ranjit Singh considered Sansar Chand's talk as a ruse. He promptly put Aniradh under arrest. Sansar Chand yielded and Durbar troops took possession of the fort on 24th August, 1809. A complete subjugation could not be possible until Gorkhas were finally persuaded to give up their intention to hold

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over Kangra.

At the time of entry of the Lahore troops into the Kangra's fort, the Gorkhas lay encamped at Ganesh Ghati. At that place, the Lahore forces and the Gorkha army, commanded by Amar Singh Thapa, fought a pitched battle. The Gorkhas were defeated and had to roll back to their country. The Gorkhas menace of Punjab came to an end for ever. Sansar Chand's ambition to establish his hegemony in the hills was also shattered. Sansar Chand became a tributary of the Maharaja paying annually Rs. 2 *lacs*, 11th of the total revenue of his territory which he was allowed to possess after surrender.[20]

The fall of Kangra was a signal for the end of Katoch domination in the hills. In 1811, the fort of Kotal fell to the Sikhs. In 1813, Desa Singh Majithia annexed the territory of Raja Bhup Singh of Sarup Pur. In 1815, Rajas of Noorpur and Jaswan were ousted from their territory. In 1818, Raja of Datarpur detained a *jagirdar* of Lahore Durbar. In the same year, ruler of Siba agreed to be Maharaja's tributary. In 1831, the ruler of Kutlehar submitted to Lahore Durbar. The petty hill chiefs, who agreed to pay tribute to Lahore Durbar were Chamba, Mirpur, Kotal, Shahpur, Jasrota, Bosoli, Jaswan, Majipur, Kutlehar, Mandi, Saket, Kulu.

Not long after, the Maharaja held a Great Durbar, to which all the tributaries were invited to attend. Just after this, Maharaja led campaign against Jiwan Singh of Sialkot and Sahib Singh of Gujarat. Jiwan Singh put up stout resistance but he was ultimately defeated and his territory was annexed. Sahib Singh, however, made his submission and agreed to become Ranjit Singh's obedient tributary.

The last conquest of the year was the fort of Shekhupura, the only one of three major forts of the Punjab which was in hostile land.

Tara Singh (1710-1807), the Chief of Dalewalia *Misl*, died in 1807. Just at the time when his dead body was about to be cremated, Ranjit Singh reached Rahon and annexed his whole territory after defeating his brave widow.

Similarly, Bhagat Singh, the chief of Karorsinghia *Misl* was defeated and his territory in the north of Satluj was annexed. Bhagat Singh took refuge in his territory south of River Sutlej.

Nakai *Misl*'s possessions were taken in 1810. The Maharaja was not influenced by his relationship with the Misl nor by the fact that the Nakai Chief, Kahan Singh was in the employ of the Durbar. Kahan Singh was given Rs. 20 thousand and the entire area which included Chunian, Dipalpur, Sharkarpur and Kamalia, was attached to his state. When Nakai agent protested, Ranjit Singh told that he would give the territory to the administrator for Kharag Singh who was not the prince, a grandson of the Nakai, in 1803.

In1803, Jodh Singh, the son of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, with whom Ranjit Singh

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had entered into friendship, died. Ranjit Singh gave *jagir* to his protégé, Gurdit Singh. But when he died in 1816, Ranjit Singh annexed his estate.

Sada Kaur, the chief of Kanahyia Misl and mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh was unhappy with Ranjit Signh's attitude towards her daughter, Mehtab Kaur. According to H.T. Princep, "Ranjit Signh had asked Sada Kaur to make provision out of her territory for his sons, Sher Singh and Tara Singh, who had been born of her daughter Mehtab Kaur, now dead".[21] Sada Kaur refused but was compelled to execute the deed in favour of her grandsons. All her possessions were annexed and she was kept a prisoner till her death. According to Amar Nath, "Ranjit Singh took such strong action because he found her addressing letters to his adversaries."[22]

Annexation of Multan

Having established his hegemony in almost the whole of central Punjab, Ranjit Singh addressed himself to reducing the province of Multan, then ruled by Muzaffar Khan Sadozoi. Many factors influenced Ranjit Singh to be more serious to undertake its conquest. The first was Muzaffar Khan's personal inclinations towards the ruler of Afghanistan. Second, it was a trade centre in which goods were exchanged with the countries beyond Bolan Pass. Third, there was a direct route from Multan to Bolan pass to Kandhar provinces under the Persians at that time and it was not unlikely that via Multan, with the connivance of Muzaffar Khan, Ranjit Singh might have to face the campaigns of Muslim *jehadis* in conjunction with the Muslim foreigners. Ranjit Singh apprehended the state of Multan pierced between the state of Bahawalpur and southern Sindh could combine and pose a serious threat to his ambition of establishing sovereignty over the whole Punjab. Fourth, it was well known that Multan was a rich State. Its total revenue from all sources was Rs. 6,80,975 per year and its fort had a treasury having countless precious things collected by Afghan Kings of several generations.[23] Lastly, there was impression that the fall of Multan would break the phalanx of Muslim States in the South and Chiefs of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Mankera would remain subdued. Further, this conquest would open the road to Sindh.

Maharaja had made four attempts to conquer Multan in 1802, 1805, 1807, and 1810. In his first attempt, Muzaffar Khan secured his deliverance by paying a huge sum as *Nazrana*. In his second attempt, the Maharaja had to leave the work half done because he was recalled to Amritsar when Holkar, pursued by the British forces, entered Amritsar for refuge and help. His third attempt was warranted by the news that Muzaffar Khan had aligned with Nizamuddin, the ruler of Kasur, to browbeat Ranjit Singh and had given shelter to Ahmed Sial of Jhang, who having been defeated by Maharaja, had fled to his country. Ranjit Singh invaded the city of Multan and

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occupied its many parts. Muzaffar Khan made his submission and Ranjit Singh, after getting indemnity, returned to his capital, Lahore. Ranjit Singh made his fourth attempt in 1810. This time the former general-cum-statesman led the attack.[24] After a bloody battle, Ranjit Singh had to return after getting 2.5 lakhs of rupees.

His final attempt was made in the year 1819. This decision was taken because the time was most opportune. The Afghans were preoccupied in their fight with Persians in their Western front. The indecisive engagement was reported to have been fought at Khurasan. Wazir Fateh Barkzai was reported to have been injured and was likely to remain out of action for some time. Under such circumstance, Ranjit Singh reckoned that Muzaffer Khan could not get help directly or indirectly from outside.

A force of 20 thousand men under Misar Diwan Chand was ordered to march to Multan. Preparations were made on a large scale. All the boats on the Satluj were requisitioned to ensure a regular supply of provisions. The overall charge of maintaining the free flow of war material and food grains was given to Kharag Singh's mother, Mai Nakkain, who set up her headquarters at Kamalia. Bhangi Gun, Zamzam, was also taken to Multan, so also was Platoon of Nihangs. Maharaja stayed at Lahore. A dispatch rider was posted at every third mile between the capital and Multan so that Maharaja could get the hour-to-hour information and be able to transmit orders immediately. Muzaffar Khan was aware of Maharaja's preparation. He planned to defend himself in three stages; in the country side, in the city and in the fort.

The first engagement was in the open, where he let the Ghazi do most of the fighting. The battle lasted for only one day. The Ghazi gained martyrdom at this spot. The second round began by the Lahore troops surrounding the city and bombarding its walls. The defenders had to retreat into the fort after a couple of weeks to fight the third or last round. The fort was surrounded by large deep moat. For a whole month, IIahi Bakhsh's Battery pounded the mud and brick walls of .the fort without making any impression. The Bhangi cannon was also harnessed to blast the wall. It did slug 80 pound of solid metal thrusting into the wall causing huge holes. At this critical juncture, as is recorded by Ghulam Jilani in Jang-e-Multan, a sepoy who was deputed by Muzaffar Khan to report regarding the goings-on at Lahore Durbar saw the amusing enthusiasm with which the Sikh soldiers, under IIahi Bakhsh, fought. When a cannon lost one of its wheels and could not properly be fired without support, soldiers wrangled against each other for the privilege to having it rest on their shoulders. Many were killed with the recoil of the gun.[25] Muzaffar Khan had enough of fighting and sent his envoy to discuss terms of surrender. He was offered Shujahabad Khangarh and big *jagir* if he gave up the fort. Muzaffar Khan accepted the terms. Soon after, when the draft was presented to him, he was dissuaded from signing it by soldiers who said that 'it is better to die in honor than to live in shame'.[26] Ranjit Singh was enraged and

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ordered his generals to re-commence the battle. The cannon blew up the earth which had been hurriedly placed to repair the breaches of the fort. The Nihangs came to the fore again. They, under the leadership of Sadhu Singh, rushed through the breach and closed on the defenders.[27] They pressed the Multan forces so much that they were driven to the place where the Khan had himself pitched. The Nawab and his son, all donned in the green garb of the Mohammedan faith and with drawn swords in their hands, confronted the Sikh forces heroically. Muzaffar Khan, his 2 sons and a nephew were killed. The two younger sons, Sarfaraz Khan and Zulfikar Khan, were brought to Lahore a little later. The fort capitulated on 2nd June, 1818. The Maharaja extended respect and hospitality to both the living sons of Muzaffar Khan and endowed on them a big *jagir* of Saraqpur which remained in their possession for a long time. The Maharaja, as usual, concluded all of these activities with a huge offering at Harimandar Sahib.[28] Rich reward and titles were bestowed on the brave generals and soldiers. The cities of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated for a week.[29] The conquest of Multan immensely increased the prestige of the Maharaja. The Afghans everywhere, especially in the Punjab, began to fear him. Ranjit Singh on his part very correctly computed that in case he wanted safety and stability of the citizens, he must end the principalities of Afghans which had relations with Afghanistan. The conquest of Multan was a clarion call to the Afghan Rulers as well as a pleasant augury of a new era where the natives of the Punjab would be able to hold their head high or the Punjabis would get rid of the shackles of foreign rule.

Conquest of Kashmir

Long before Ranjit Singh attempted to occupy Kashmir, Kashmir valley had been ruled by Mohammedan rulers. For a long time, it remained a part of Afghan Empire. Then Zaman Shah, the Abdali, succeeded to the throne. He appointed Ata Mohammad as its Governor. Shah Zaman was ousted by an internal rising and blinded thereafter. He was succeeded by Shah Mehmood. Shortly after, he was forced to vacate the throne by Shah Shujah, his half-brother. Not much later Mehmood occupied the throne with the help of Fateh Khan Barkzai whom he appointed his Wazir. Shah Shujah, still not shaken, made a further attempt to defeat his rival but failed. In such attempt, Ata Mohammad of Kashmir helped him liberally. A while after, Shah Shujah's relations with Ata Mohammad got embittered and one of his failed adventures fell into the hands of Ata Mohammad's brother, Jahandad Khan, the Governor of Attok, who sent him to Ata Mohammad to be kept as prisoner.

Fateh Khan, Kabul Wazir, in the meanwhile headed to capture Kashmir because Ata Mohammad had held Shah Shujah and he apprehended that he might play a negative role in his intended project of re-establishing of Afghan Empire. He invaded

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Kashmir in 1812. Just at this time Ranjit Singh also moved his forces to Kashmir.

When both sides learnt of each other's design, they decided to seek each other's cooperation in the venture, declaring that it was their common cause, although both parties had different motives. Fateh Khan wanted Ranjit Singh's help because he was afraid lest the latter should help Ata Mohammad. Some scholars believe that Fateh Khan's real motive to meet Ranjit Singh, was only to steal an opportunity to put Ranjit Singh to death while he was alone. Ranjit Singh's purpose to cooperate with Fateh Khan was to have first hand knowledge of the Valley as well as to assess Afghans' military capability. In Dr. G.S. Chhabra's appraisal, the launch of the march of the Maharaja's forces on Kashmir was motivated by his eagerness to secure from Kashmir Governor the person of Shah Shujah, whose wife, Wafa Begum, who had taken shelter with him, had promised the surrender of Koh-i-Noor to Maharaja if he could extricate her husband out of the clutches of Ata Mohammad.

Ranjit Singh and Ata Mohammad met at Rohtas and concluded an agreement. According to Wade and Murray, Ranjit Singh promised to help Fateh Khan with 1200 soldiers under the command of Mohkam Chand, besides providing facilities to the Afghan forces to march through Rajauri and Pir Punjal in return only for 9 lakhs of rupees from the Kashmir spoil and Afghan help.

Ranjit Singh in a letter dated 1813 to Fateh Khan records that Fateh Khan agreed to give 1/3 of Kashmir's territory, 1/3 of spoils as well as help to Ranjit Singh, who in return had promised to help Fateh Khan with soldiers in Kashmir's conquest.

Having decided to terms of agreement, both the parties advanced, each harboring mental reservation to out-match the other if the opportunity offered.[30] Be that it may, with Mohkam's help Fateh Khan occupied Kashmir but refused to comply with the agreement. Obviously it was a diplomatic defeat of Ranjit Singh who failed to read the real mind of Fateh Khan. Ranjit Singh was outwitted and, except procuring the person of Shah Shujah, he gained nothing.

At this juncture, he very adroitly proceeded to capture Attock which at that time was governed by Ata Mohammad's brother, Jahandad Khan. After the fall of his brother, Ata Mohammad apprehended some serious against him by Fateh Khan. He, therefore invited Ranjit Singh to occupy the fort which he did without any clash.[31] The fort carried great importance. It lay on the route through which Central Asian invaders had come and now its occupation would enable its occupier to guard his or her territory more effectively as also to expand his or her territory up to Khyber Pass.

Shortly after, Fateh Khan's brother, Dost Mohammad Khan marched against the Sikhs with 4000 soldiers to retrieve lost prestige, but he was defeated and made to wheel back. Ranjit Singh's prestige increased manyfold. According to Burnes, this was the first real victory of Sikhs over the Afghans and of utmost importance as the

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power of the latter collapsed on the eastern side of the Indus, which Ranjit Singh consolidated under his own rule.[32]

Always craving for Kashmir, Ranjit Singh sent another expedition under the command of Ram Dayal, who was a grandson of Mohkam Chand. He himself looked for the supply of war material and soldiers for reinforcements. Azam Khan who was the younger brother of Fateh Khan and helmed the administration of Kashmir, put up stiff resistance. A pitched battle was fought. Ram Dayal, in spite of receiving reinforcements, was encircled by the Afghan troops and could only extricate himself with great difficulty. It is said that Azam Khan had a regard for Ram Dayal's grandfather and it was due to this reason that Ram Dayal was let off. Diwan Amar Nath, however asserts, Ram Dayal was victorious killing 2000 Afghans.[33] It was only then Azam Khan acknowledged Ranjit Singh's supremacy that Ram Dayal returned.[34]

Next expedition was launched in 1819. Then Ranjit Singh was in a favorable condition. Fateh Khan had died and Azam Khan, his brother, working as Governor of Kashmir, thought it prudent to struggle for assuming the place of his brother. He left his younger brother, Jabbar Khan, with a force he considered adequate to defend the Valley. Jabbar Khan resorted to rule with an iron hand. His treatment of the non-Muslims, especially the Sikhs, became very hard and many Hindus and Sikhs were compelled to leave the Valley. Among the refugees was Jabbar Khan's own Revenue Minister, Birbal Dhar. The hard-pressed Hindus and Sikhs came to Lahore and urged Ranjit Singh that it was an opportune moment for him to invade. By his earlier campaign in the north-west, Ranjit Singh snapped the link between Kashmir and western heartland of Afghanistan and the Pathan tribal territory, there was now little danger of any sizeable force coming from this region to oppose him. Everything seemed propitious. By April 1819, the snow and the passes of the Valley were cleared. Ranjit Singh assembled his forces[35] at Wazirabad which he divided into three formations. The first formation was placed under the joint commander Misr Diwan Chand, Zafarjang and Sardar Singh Ahluwalia. The second formation was commanded by Prince Kharak Singh. The third formation was under the charge of Maharaja. The first two formations were to march together as far as Rajouri and thereafter they were to bifurcate and make a surprise movement on Shupaiyan where they expected to meet the Afghan Army.

Kharak Singh's formation advanced without much opposition up to Baramula and guided by Sultan Khan, the former ruler of Baramula who had been imprisoned by Ranjit Singh and later released on promise to guide the Khalsa Army, was able to fight back to Poonchis and reached Shupaiyan. From the other side Diwan Chand, after crossing Pir Panjal Range, pushed on and the two formations came in view of each other.

Now, the two Divisions advanced further by separate routes to keep the hills of

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the Pir Panjal in occupation. Here, a gruesome battle was fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans in which the former emerged victorious. Thereafter, both these formations advanced to Sarai Allabad after crossing difficult mountain range.

Here, Jabbar Khan had blocked the range with 12000 strong army. The Khalsa Army attacked the enemy in July, 1819. Both sides fought doggedly. As the fight was in progress, Akali Phoola Singh's band of intrepid Nihangs arrived at the scene shouting 'Akal Akal', fell upon the enemy with such a force that the enemy was completely traumatized. At the same time the murderous fires of Khalsa gunner brought havoc in the army of Jabbar Khan. Jabbar Khan was severely wounded and could barely escape with his life. He went to Afghanistan through the hills of Baramula. The Khalsa Army occupied the fort of Shergarh and other forts and finally entered Srinagar in April 1819. Kharak Singh issued strict orders against looting or molesting of the women. The Maharaja immediately thereafter went to Amritsar for thanksgiving. On 22nd September he was in Lahore, where he rode through triumphant arches.

Moti Ram, the son of late Diwan Mohkam Chand, was appointed Governor. Troops were billeted in different towns to mop up pockets of Afghan resistance. Kashmir was an important acquisition for the Punjab. Apart from 70 lakhs fetched every year in revenue, it extended the frontier of the State to the borders of China and Tibet. Misr Diwan Chand was honored with higher title of Fateh-o-Nusrat Nashib with a *jagir* of Rs. 5,000.[36] In early 1820, Ranjit Singh sent Jamadar Khushal Singh against Nawab Kamal Khan of Dera Ismail Khan. The Nawab was expelled and his territory was assigned to the Nawab of Bahawalpur, who was already under the protection of Ranjit Singh.

In 1821, Ranjit Singh proceeded to annex Mankera, the capital of Nawab Haji Ahmed Khan. In early October the Maharaja reached Khushab, from where he went to Kandian village. At that place Misr Diwan Chand and Hari Singh Nalwa joined him. The Khalsa Army occupied Bhakkar. After this, the Khalsa soldiers under the command of Khushal Singh, captured Dera Ismail Khan.[37] Then, he captured Mankera. The Nawab's courage broke down and he submitted to the Maharaja. The Nawab was granted Dera Ismail Khan as *jagir* and Ranjit Singh annexed his territory worth about a million rupees of yearly revenue to the Kingdom of Lahore.

With the fall of Mankera, the huge tract between the Jhelum and Indus was added to the Punjab.

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– (Principal) Surjit Singh Gandhi

References

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2. Famous Afghan Proverb.
3. The remaining 4 guns, one of iron and 3 of the brass, were recovered in 1823 and were kept in Ranjit Singh's personal arsenal.
4. Diwan Amar Nath confirms receipt of Khilat by Ranjit Singh from Shah Zaman.
5. Lahore was formally liberated by the Sikhs from Afghan control in 1764 when Bhangi Sardars Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh stole through the night and captured the governor at a dance party. The city divided between them and Sobha Singh of the Kanahya Misl in 1791. The scions of these men were in possession of the city.
6. Mohammad Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 337
7. Ibid., p. 349.
8. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Dafter II, p. 43.
9. Bikramjit Singh Hasrat, *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh*, 1977, p. 41.
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11. Ali-Al-Din, *Ibrat Nama*, pp. 222-223.
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13. Gordon J.H., *The Sikhs,* Vol VI, p. 86, Blackwood, London 1904.
14. Ibid., pp 152-155.
15. Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Guru Nanak Dev Univeristy, Amritsar, p. 41.
16. This cannon was put in service in many of Ranjit Singh's campaigns and after that faced the English in Anglo-Sikh Wars.
17. Kanahyalal, '*Tawarikh-e-Punjab*', p. 174.
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24. Payne, *A short History of the Sikhs*, p. 191
25. Ghulam Jilani, *Tawarikh-e-Multan*, Also refer to '*Ranjit Singh*' by Khushwant Singh, p. 116.
26. Ganesh Das, *Ham Hain Pathan Mane Aur Ki Na Ana Laren Maren.*
27. Many accounts including that of Prem Singh Hoti Mardan give credit to the victorious assaults of Akali Phula Singh. Sohan Lal, however, does not agree. According to him, Phoola Singh was in Attock at that time.
28. Mohan Lal, '*Tawarikh-e-Ranjit Singh*' pp. 400-405.
29. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs* (The Sikh Lion of Lahore), p. 111.
30. Payne, *A short history of the Sikhs*, p. 192.
31. The amount had to be disbursed among the Jahandad's soldiers who would vacate the fort only after the long-standing arrears of their services had been paid.
32. Burnes Lieut Alexander, '*Travels into Bokhara*' Vol. III 1834, pp. 201-208.
33. This disorder was sore subject with the Maharaja and he never touched on it without denouncing Kashmir as a vile place footnote M. Gregore Vol. I, *op. cit*,
34. Amar Nath Diwan, '*Zafarnama Ranjit Singh.*
35. Khushwant Singh, '*Ranjit Singh*' p. 143.
36. Sohan Lal, *op. cit*, II Page 361, S.R. Kohli, *op. cit.*, p 126.
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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AND THE CIS-SUTLEJ SIKH STATES

Occupation of Lahore

Of all the Indian people who rose on the ruins of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, none were more distinguished and outstanding than the Sikhs. Their struggle against the enemies of their faith, and for sovereignty in the Punjab, "was marked by their overwhelming fighting capacity, astonishing energy, stubborn perseverance, unprecedented sacrifices, unshakable faith in their destiny, predicted by Guru Gobind Singh, and the brilliancy of their success."[1] In the quadrangular contest among the Mughals, the Afghans, the Marathas and the Sikhs for supremacy in the Punjab, the Sikhs ultimately came out triumphant. The credit for the successful termination of the Sikh war of independence has been attributed, and rightly so, to the entire nation *(qaum)* of the Sikhs[2], who eminently represented the indomitable spirit of the Khalsa inculcated by their venerable Tenth Master. Nevertheless, the valiant Sikh leaders of various *jathas* such as Kapur Singh Faizalpuria, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Charhat Singh Sukarchakia, Jai Singh Kanahiya, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Ala Singh Phulkian, Baghel Singh Karorsinghia, Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh Bhangis and others, played a highly significant role in various arduous encounters and enterprises which paved the way for the rise of the Sikh power. And all these leaders became the founders of independent Sikh principalities, popularly called the *misls*. Of the twelve *misls*, eight were located in the Trans-Sutlej region[3] and the remaining four, namely, Phulkian, Karorsinghia, Shahid and Nishanwalia, were established in the Cis-Sutlej region or the region between the Sutlej and the Yamuna.

True to the prophecy of a shrewd European traveller as early as 1783,[4] Ranjit Singh of the Sukerchakia *Misl* was destined to emerge as a powerful sovereign by

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absorbing the territories of the Sikh *misls* and other petty chiefships of the region. A highly ambitious Sikh chief with his headquarters at Gujranwala — and his ambition was in proportion to his extraordinary bravery and courage — he earnestly embarked upon the task of subjugating the Sikh principalities. In 1799-1800, he successfully conquered Lahore from the Bhangi *sardars*. Occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh was contested by three chiefs Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, Gulab Singh Bhangi and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and many petty chiefs. The allies forces camped at village Bhasin, ten miles from Lahore. Ranjit Singh's army assisted by Sada Kaur's army went out to village Bhasin. Two armies remained face to face for two months. Meanwhile Gulab Singh Bhangi died of excessive drinking. The invading army dispersed. This was bloodless victory of Ranjit Singh in 1800 AD (*History of Punjab*, M. Latif, p. 352). Subsequently, he conquered another important Bhangi possession, Amritsar (religious capital of the Sikhs) in 1805. Having consolidated his position in the conquered territories, he decided to undertake expeditions to the Cis-Sutlej region most of which were then under the possession of Sikh chiefs of high and low degrees. These chiefships were many thousands in number; in size and, in importance, they varied from the State of Patiala to the pettiest chiefship of ten or twenty shares in a single village.[5]

Notable Cis-Sutlej Chiefships – A Profile

For the proper understanding of Ranjit Singh's relationship with the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs, it will be appropriate to give a brief profile of the notable chiefships whose principal rulers Ranjit Singh had to contend with.

Patiala: Patiala was the largest and most important State in the Cis-Sutlej region. Its ruler had always been recognised as the head of the Phulkian dynasty, which derived its name from Chaudhri Phul, the common ancestor of the chiefs of Patiala, Nabha and Jind and the *sardars* of Bhadaur, Malaud, etc. Phul is said to have been blessed with power and plenty by Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Guru.[6] Phul had seven sons, including Ram Chand and Tilok Chand, who were the devoted disciples of Guru Gobind Singh and had been initiated by the latter into the Khalsa, assuming the names of Ram Singh and Tilok Singh. They are believed to have helped Banda Singh Bahadur with men and money in his early expeditions against the Mughals. The third son of Ram Singh, Baba Ala Singh (1691-1765) was the real founder of the Patiala State. In the words of Griffin, "Among the Sikh Chiefs of his day, Ala Singh was certainly one of the most distinguished. He was gallant, and at the same time prudent, and laid strongly the foundations of the most important of the Cis-Sutlej States."[7] His first notable conquest effected in 1722-23 was that of Barnala (called 'the wessex of the Patiala State'), which was to remain his headquarters for the next forty years or so. Thereafter, he conquered numerous territories, which included Sunam,

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Samana, Banur, Ghuram, Sanaur (comprising 84 villages, one of which was Pattanwala Theh, the site of modern Patiala city), Bathinda, Sherpur, Bhasaur, Budhlada, etc.[8] In January 1764, he joined the Dal Khalsa in attacking Sirhind and killing its Afghan governor, Zain Khan. As a result of this victory, Sirhind was handed over to Ala Singh as his share of the conquest. He shifted to Patiala in the following month and made it his new capital. Ahmad Shah Durrani (Abdali) thought it prudent to conciliate Ala Singh, confirmed him in his possessions and awarded to him a robe of honour and the title of 'Raja', with *tabl-o-alam,* as insignia of royalty.[9] A shrewd diplomat, Ala Singh had won over to his side the Mughal Emperor, the Durrani invader and the Dal Khalsa. According to Hari Ram Gupta, "Alah Singh may rightly be called Bismarck of the Sikhs. He had three balls in his hands, and by throwing them simultaneously into the air, he always caught them, never allowing anyone to fall."[10]

Ala Singh died in 1765 and he was succeeded by his grandson, Amar Singh. A brave and courageous young chief, he largely expanded his territories and made Patiala "the most powerful State between the Jamna and the Sutlej."[11] He received the title of *Raja-i-Rajgan Bahadur* from Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1767. He died in 1781 at the young age of thirty-four.[12] According to H.R. Gupta, "If he had lived up to 1803, there might have been two Sikh kingdoms, the Lahore kingdom extending up to Sutlej and the Patiala kingdom between rivers Sutlej and Jamuna, and from Shivalik hills to the desert of Bikaner."[13] Though a hypothetical statement, this remark may be construed as the scholar's tribute to Amar Singh's 'quick intelligence, firm determination and strong arm' that had made Patiala the most powerful State in the Cis-Sutlej region.

Amar Singh was succeeded by his minor son, Sahib Singh, who was only seven years old at that time. During his minority as well as after attaining majority, the Patiala State was saved from disintegration by the Wazir, Nanun Mal and three notable ladies of the royal family — Rani Hukman, the grandmother of Sahib Singh; Rani Rajinder Kaur, the first cousin of Raja Amar Singh who was marrjed at Phagwara; and Rani Sahib Kaur, the elder sister of the young chief. All these four personalities had, however, suffered greatly due to the imbecility of Sahib Singh and died in despair. Even when grown up, Sahib Singh proved to be deficient, both physically and mentally. He possessed neither the bravery nor the diplomatic skill, much less the administrative acumen of his two illustrious predecessors. A whimsical person with eccentric habits,[14] he was under the influence of corrupt and selfish officials, and often ill-treated his close relatives and able officials. Due to his imbecility and inadequacies as a ruler, a great opportunity was lost for the Patiala State to bring all the petty Cis-Sutlej States under its sway and sovereignty.[15] The dispute between the States of Patiala and Nabha over the village Doladhi and the acute differences between the Raja and Rani (Aus

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Kaur) of Patiala provided the much coveted opportunities to Ranjit Singh to launch Cis-Sutlej expeditions in 1806-07. During the time of Sahib Singh, the Patiala State along with other Cis-Sutlej chiefships came under the protection of the British in 1809. At that time, the total revenue of the Patiala State according to Ochterlony's Report on the Cis-Sutlej country was 610,000 rupees and military strength was 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry.[16] In the remaining years of Sahib Singh's rule (1809-1813), the British Agent began to interfere more and more in the affairs of the Patiala State, and the periodic intervention of the British authorities in the State affairs continued during the reign of his son and successor, Karam Singh (1813-1845). Every major or minor matter relating to the State had to be referred to the British authorities.

Jind: Jind was the second Phulkian State in the Cis-Sutlej region. Tilok Singh, the eldest son of Chaudhri Phul, had two sons, Gurdit Singh and Sukhchain Singh. Sukhchain Singh's son, Gajpat Singh (1738-1789) was the founder of the Jind State. He took part in the Sikh coalition of 1763-64 against the Afghan Faujdar of Sirhind, Zain Khan and after the victory of the Sikhs, he received a large tract of territory as his share of the spoils, including Jind and Safidon.[17] In 1772, the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam conferred upon him the title of *Raja* under a royal *farman.* From this time, Gajpat Singh assumed the style of an independent prince and coined money in his own name.[18] He was a brave and intrepid warrior who took part in no fewer than thirty battles. He took Sangrur from the possession of Nabha. He not only overran Hansi, Hissar, Rohtak and Gohana but also exacted *nazrana* from Panipat and Karnal. His most important possessions included Jind, Sangrur, Safidon and Kharkhoda.[19] He had deep affection for Raja Amar Singh of Patiala with whom he joined in almost all his campaigns. One of Raja Gajpat Singh's daughters, named Raj Kaur, was married to Sardar Mahan Singh Sukerchakia of Gujranwala, and from this wedlock was born Ranjit Singh.

Gajpat Singh was succeeded by his son Bhag Singh who ruled from 1789 to 1819. Like his father, Raja Bhag Singh was also a close ally of the Patiala chief. He joined the Patiala army under Bibi Sahib Kaur in 1794 against the Marathas who were successfully attacked at night and repulsed at Rajgarh near Ambala. He also successfully checked the advance of George Thomas towards the Sikh territories and later on, of General Perron of the Maratha service.[20]

He was the first of the Cis-Sutlej princes to seek an alliance with the British Government in 1803. He assisted Lord Lake in his operations against the Marathas, and prevented his nephew, Ranjit Singh, from espousing their cause.[21] Lord Lake recognised him as a 'friend and ally' and rewarded him by the grant of the *parganas* of Bawana and Gohanas.[22] Bhag Singh also invited Maharaja Ranjit Singh to settle disputes among the Phulkian chiefs. During the Cis-Sutlej campaign of Maharaja in 1806-07,

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Bhag Singh received from his nephew Ludhiana, twenty-four villages of Jandiala, two villages of Kot and two of Jagraon, three villages of Ghungrana and twenty-seven villages of Morinda; later on he handed over Ludhiana to the British for which he was amply compensated. Thus, like a shrewd diplomat, Bhag Singh gained considerable territories both from the British and the Maharaja. According to Ochterlony's Report on the Cis-Sutlej country in 1809, the total annual revenue of the State was 125,000 rupees and it possessed cavalry of 600.[23]

After the demise of Bhag Singh, his eldest son Fateh Singh succeeded him but his reign (1819-22) was very short and uneventful. Sangat Singh, the son and successor of Fateh Singh was only eleven years old when he succeeded to the chiefship. During his reign, administration deteriorated because of the inexperienced and corrupt officials. Even after he was grown up, the administration did not improve. He would, however, pay frequent visits to the Lahore kingdom to meet his uncle Maharaja Ranjit Singh who also liked his nephew and granted him *jagirs*. The British authorities decided to put a stop to this 'connection and allegiance' and issued a general order to this effect.[24] In 1834, when Sangat Singh proceeded towards Lahore in order to join the Maharaja in the celebration of Dushera festival, he was called back by the orders of the British. The Raja was so much frustrated that he died on his way back to Jind.

Nabha: The Nabha State was second in population but smallest in area of the three Phulkian States. Its rulers were the descendants of Chaudhri Tilok Singh, the eldest son of Chaudhri Phul and they reperesented the senior branch of the Phulkian family. Hamir Singh was the real founder of the Nabha State, who ruled from 1754-1783. He was a brave and energetic chief, who added largely to the possessions he had inherited from his predecessors. He founded the town of Nabha in 1755 and obtained the possession of Bhadson in 1759. In 1763-64, he joined Raja Ala Singh along with other Sikh Chiefs against Zain Khan, the Mughal *Faujdar* of Sirhind and obtained Amloh as his share of spoils. He was the first ruler of Nabha who established a mint, which was a symbol of his complete independence.[25]

In 1774, Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind took Hamir Singh prisoner by treachery and seized the town of Sangrur, Amloh and Bhadson. His shrewd wife, Rani Desu, with the help of her son-in-law, Sahib Singh of Bhangi Misl got him released and recovered most of the territories but Sangrur was never restored and became the capital of the Jind State.[26]

The successor of Hamir Singh, Raja Jaswant Singh (1783-1840), was only eight years old when he assumed the chiefship. During his minority, the affairs of the State were managed quite successfully by his stepmother, Rani Desu. After her death in 1790 Jaswant Singh took the reigns of government in his own hands. The relations between Nabha and Jind were improved when both acted together against their

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common enemy George Thomas, the master of Hansi. But, in the struggle between the British and the Marathas, Raja Jaswant Singh sided with the former. He refused to help Holkar against the British when he halted at Nabha in 1805.[27] During the Cis-Sutlej expeditions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Jaswant Singh remained a firm ally of the Maharaja and he received a grant of four villages of Ghungrana estate and the tract of Khanna consisting of eighteen villages from the latter. But at length he, with the other Cis-Sutlej chiefs, began to realize that "Ranjit Singh's friendship was only one degree less dangerous than his enmity" and he became willing to come closer to the British. He received Colonel Ochterlony on his arrival at Nabha with the utmost cordiality in February 1809 and in May of the same year he was taken into the protection of the British Government, along with other chiefs of Malwa and Sirhind.[28] According to Ochterlony's Report on the Cis-Sutlej country (1809), the State at that time had the annual revenue of 150,000 rupees and possessed military strength of 400 cavalry.[29] In 1810, a special *sanad* was granted to him confirming to him all his possessions under the seal of Governor-General.[30] Ochterlony found Jaswant Singh "by far the most sober and intelligent of all the Phulkian rulers." His capabilities carried the State to the zenith of its glory and prosperity.[31]

Kaithal: The Kaithal family has the same origin as the Phulkian family, the ancestors of both having been of the same stock.[32] Gurbakhsh Singh, the founder of the chiefship was the son of Bhai Ram Dyal who had a great reputation as a saint. Gurbakhsh Singh was a brave warrior rather than a saint. He was a friend of Raja Ala Singh of Patiala and they made many expeditions together.[33] The possessions of Gurbakhsh Singh were increased by his sons, the most notable of whom was Desu Singh. It was Desu Singh who captured Kaithal from some Afghans and he is regarded as the real founder of Kaithal. He conquered many other territories and the State of Kaithal under him comprised of Kaithal, Pehowa, Murtazapur, Pundri and Kutana. He ruled for about eleven years and died in 1780.

Bhai Lal Singh succeeded to the chiefship after setting aside the usurpation of his stepbrother, Bhai Bahal Singh. He extended the territories of the chiefship. In 1803, he joined the British camp against the Marathas. As a result of this service, Lord Lake granted to him a *jagir* in Gohana. An able ruler and a shrewd diplomat,[34] Bhai Lal Singh "was the brain behind all decisions and schemes formulated by the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs."[35] Both Mir Yusuf Ali Khan and Ochterlony wrote at length to the higher British authorities about Bhai Lal Singh's influence on the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs, particularly on Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha. According to Ochterlony's Report in 1809 on the Cis-Sutlej country, the annual revenue of the State of Kaithal under Bhai Lal Singh was 225,000 rupees and it had the military strength of 600 cavalry.[36] He ruled successfully

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till his death in 1818.

The State of Kaithal came next to Patiala in rank and status. Its territories included the *parganas* of Kaithal, Fatehpur, Pundri, Pehowa, Sothar, Cheeka, Soonsur, Burna, Kularan, Budhlada, Halree, Bhochokee, Behkan, Khoodal, Kunak and Dhanausoo.[37]

Faridkot: The chiefship of Faridkot was founded by Hamir Singh who, in 1763, received that estate as his share of the patrimony. The town had been founded some time before and named after the celebrated Sufi saint, Sheikh Farid. Hamir Singh enlarged it and the town became an attractive centre for the artisans and traders.[38] After his death in 1782, Hamir Singh was succeeded by his son Mohr Singh. The new Chief was an incapable, debauched man and paid no attention to the administration of his estates, several of which such as Akuhar, Karmi and Behkbodla were seized by his neighbours.[39] Mohr Singh's son Charhat Singh revolted against his father, imprisoned him and got rid of him in 1798 and usurped the chiefship. The old *sardars* did not like the succession of Charhat Singh who had been guilty of the charge of patricide. In 1804, Dal Singh who was the uncle of Charhat Singh suddenly attacked the Faridkot fort with a handful of followers and succeeded in capturing it. Charhat Singh was taken by surprise and assassinated. This brutal act of Dal Singh was not liked by the people and only a month later he was killed as a result of conspiracy hatched by a Sardar, Fauja Singh in collaboration with the deceased chief's minor son, Gulab Singh. Gulab Singh now became the chief and he appointed Fauja Singh as his Diwan or Minister.[40] It was under these circumstances that Faridkot was attacked and captured by Diwan Mohkam Chand, a general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1806 and two years after by the Maharaja himself. In April 1809, the British authorities compelled Ranjit Singh to restore Faridkot to Sardar Gulab Singh. There were about sixty villages in this State. Fauja Singh ably administered the affairs of the State until Gulab Singh became adult. Gulab Singh was assassinated in 1826.

Ladwa: The Ladwa State was founded in 1764, at the time of the Sikh conquest of Sirhind province by two brothers, Sahib Singh and Gurdit Singh.[41] Babain was the seat of Sahib Singh while Ladwa was the headquarters of Gurdit Singh. Ladwa was located in the close vicinity of Karnal, about thirty-three miles to the South-East of Ambala. A brave and ambitious chief, Gurdit Singh conquered and annexed the neighbouring important town of Karnal. Later, on demise of his brother he inherited his whole estate consisting of the *parganas* of Indri and Babain. He was one of the prominent chiefs who launched expeditions in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and acquired the estates of Jhinjhana, Kandhela and Shamli.[42] According to Ochterlony's Report on the Cis-Sutlej country (1809), the total annual revenue of the State was 150,000 rupees with military strength of 1,000 cavalry.[43]

Kalsia: The Kalsia State originally formed a part of the territories of the

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Karorsinghia Misl. The State was founded by Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, a Sandhu Jat of the village Kalsian in the Kasur *tehsil* of the Lahore district. When the Sikhs conquered Sirhind and occupied its territories in 1764, Gurbakhsh Singh also shared the exploits and conquests of the Karorsinghia Misl and occupied the *parganas* of Chhachhrauli and Sialba. He left his son Jodh Singh at Chhachhrauli, also called Kalsia and himself settled down at Banbeli (Hoshiarpur district) where he died in 1774. Jodh Singh (1761-1818) was a spirited and chivalrous chief who made considerable additions to his otherwise small principality by undertaking repeated expeditions to the Doab. Jodh Singh was a devoted friend of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1807, he joined him in the attack of Naraingarh in Ambala and received the estates of Badala Kheri and Shamchapal. He also fought for him in many battles in the Punjab and his services were rewarded with the grant of *ilaqa* of Garhdiwala in the district of Hoshiarpur.[44] In May 1809, he came under the protection of the British along with other Cis-Sutlej chiefs.

Thanesar: The estate of Thanesar, about twenty-five miles south of Ambala was founded by the two brothers, named Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh who were the nephews of Sardar Mit Singh Dallewalia. On the death of his brother, Bhanga Singh occupied the *gaddi* of Thanesar and expanded its territories. He had conducted raids on the Doab and took possession of the estate of Kariana there.[45] According to Browne, the total military strength of Thanesar under Bhanga Singh was 750 cavalry and 250 infantry.[46] He was closely related to the chiefs of Jind and Patiala.

Ambala: Ambala was among the territories (the others being Singhanwala, Sanehwal, Doraha, Shahabad, etc.), which had been acquired by Dasaundha Singh Nishanwalia as a result of the victory of the Sikhs in the battle of Sirhind in January 1764. Upon his death in 1767, he was succeeded by his brother Sangat Singh who built a brick wall around the town of Ambala, his capital. After some time, he, however, shifted to Singhanwala and handed over the possession of Ambala to his brother-in-law, Dhian Singh, who appointed Gurbakhsh Singh and Lal Singh as the *thanedars* of Ambala. After the death of Sangat Singh in 1774, his son Mohar Singh became the chief of Ambala who in the course of time was ousted by Gurbakhsh Singh (who was in possession of Morinda before this). Since Gurbakhsh Singh expired issueless in 1786, he was succeeded by his widow, Daya Kaur. She administered the chiefship efficiently with the help of Sahi Mal. In 1808, Maharaja Ranjit Singh attacked Ambala, drove out Daya Kaur and distributed her territory between Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and Lal Singh of Kaithal. At the intervention of Ochterlony in February 1809, Ambala was restored to Rani Daya Kaur.[47] She was taken under British protection along with other Cis-Sutlej chiefs in May 1809. After Daya Kaur's death in 1823 her territory lapsed to the British Government.

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Buria and Jagadhri: Sardar Bhag Singh and his younger brother, Rai Singh got the estates of Buria and Jagadhri consisting of 120 and 84 villages, respectively, as shares of their spoils after the Sikhs' conquest of Sirhind in 1764.[48] They had taken active part in the raids on the Doab territory. They opted to side with Bapooji Sindhia and as a reward of their services they got the estates of Jawalapur, Rurki, Jaroba and Manglor, but these estates were confiscated on the advent of the British.[49]

Ropar and Sialba: The founder of Ropar and Sialba estate was Sardar Hari Singh. After his demise, the chiefship was divided equally between his two sons, Charhat Singh and Deva Singh. Charhat Singh was succeeded by his son Bhup Singh, who held Ropar whereas Deva Singh took possession of Sialba. The estate consisted of 115 villages in all and located about forty-five miles north of Ambala.[50]

Bhadaur: The estate of Bhadaur was founded by Duna, who was the brother of Raja Ala Singh, the founder of Patiala State. Bhadaur located about 15 miles in the north-west of Barnala, was the original seat of residence of Phulkian family. The two brothers Bir Singh and Dip Singh, who controlled the affairs of the estate were 'very adventurous and chivalrous.'[51]

Other Chiefships: Besides the States mentioned above there were many other Cis-Sutlej chiefships held by the Sikh *sardars*. Of these, mention may be made, alphabetically, of the following — Anandpur-Makhowal, Arnauli, Bidwan, Bassi, Bheri, Chilaundi, Dhanaura, Dialpur, Fatehgarh, Jhabu Majra, Jharauli, Hullahur, Kakrala, Khanna, Kharar, Kheri, Kot Guruharsahai, Ladha, Ledhran, Machhiwara, Maharajkian, Malaudh, Manimajra, Mansurwal, Morinda, Radaur, Raipur-Gujarwal, Rampur, Sadhaura, Sarai Lashkar Khan, Shahabad, Shahzadpur, Shamgarh, Sikandra, Sikri and Tangaur.[52]

Thus, numerous petty Sikh chiefships had emerged in the Sutlej-Yamuna region in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Sikh chiefs, both of the Trans-Sutlej and Cis-Sutlej regions had been united and inspired by religious and patriotic zeal; they had resisted their common enemy (the Durrani invaders and governors) with extraordinary courage. After their success, there was almost a scramble among them to acquire more and more territories, and not unoften they quarrelled and fought againt one another. They led incessant expeditions, whenever and wherever possible, to add to their respective possessions. It is quite natural to expect that under these circumstances some power would arise in the Cis-Sutlej region, strong enough to weld together the entire region under one unified control, and this is just the welding which in the Trans-Sutlej region the Bhangis attempted and the Sukarchakias achieved under the outstanding leadership of Ranjit Singh.[53] It appeared at one time that the house of Patiala would unify the entire Cis-Sutlej region under its sway. But this could not be possible on account of an imbecile ruler (Sahib Singh) having

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unfortunately succeeded to the leadership of the house. In the absence of such leadership and the existence of numerous chiefships in a state of mutual jealousies and rivalries, Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to launch Cis-Sutlej expeditions with the object of unifying all the Sikh principalities under his sovereign umbrella.

First Cis-Sutlej Expedition of Ranjit Singh

In 1806, Ranjit Singh led his first expedition to the Cis-Sutlej area. The pretext for this expedition was provided by a dispute, which had arisen between Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala and Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha over Doladhi village situated on the border of the two states. It had resulted in the murder of Bhai Tara Singh, the *thanedar* of Mansurpur, a village in the Patiala State situated at a distance of about a mile in the north-west of Nabha. Suspecting Raja Jaswant Singh's hand in the murder of Tara Singh who was held in high esteem by Raja Sahib Singh, the latter sent forces towards Mansurpur. Jaswant Singh sought help from Raja Bhag Singh of Jind. In the action that ensued, the troops of Nabha and Jind were worsted and the village Doladhi was seized by the Patiala Chief. Raja Bhag Singh who was the maternal uncle of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, now invited his nephew to come to the help of the Nabha Chief in lieu of *nazrana* of Rupees 50,000/-. Ranjit Singh responded to this invitation with alacrity. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala joined the Maharaja on the bank of Beas and accompanied him in the campaign. They crossed the river Sutlej on 26th October. At Ghungrana, Raja Bhag Singh joined his nephew and they hastened to Doladhi taking *nazrana* from the chiefs on the way. They reached there on 28th October and took possession of the village, which was then handed over to the Raja of Nabha. Ranjit Singh ordered the siege of Mansurpur. The Patiala forces offered resistance for some time but suffered heavy losses. Raja Sahib Singh sued for peace and offered costly presents and *khillats* as a mark of submission to the Maharaja. The latter also presented *khillat* to the Patiala chief and obliged him by giving back the village of Doladhi to him. Ranjit Singh brought about conciliation between the Patiala and Nabha chiefs. He got erected some brick pillars to mark the boundary line between the two states near the village and warned their rulers against its violation. After this, the other Cis-Sutlej Chiefs offered their submission and paid *nazrana*. Raja Jaswant Singh also paid the promised sum of rupees 50,000. Ranjit Singh's first Malwa expedition was 'swift and sweeping'. On his way back, he wiped out Mohammadan ruling family of Ludhiana. It was, however, made over to Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and other possessions were distributed among other protégés like Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Mohkam Chand.[54]

After the departure of Ranjit Singh, Raja Sahib Singh is said to have told Rani Aus Kaur, "He (Ranjit Singh) has several other objects in view, God send him away.

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I fear his ways."[55] The arrival of a powerful chief like Ranjit Singh with large forces in the area adjacent to their north-western frontier might have provided the cause of alarm to the British authorities. But Raja Bhag Singh of Jind and Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha in their communication to the Resident at Delhi dated 3rd November, 1806, assured the latter that Ranjit Singh had been invited by them to settle a local affair.[56]

Second Cis-Sutlej Expedition of Ranjit Singh

In 1807, the conflict between Raja Sahib Singh and his wife Rani Aus Kaur provided another coveted opportunity to Ranjit Singh to launch an expedition to the Cis-Sutlej region. The Rani demanded a separate estate for her own maintenance as well as for her son Kanwar Karam Singh and the Raja showed reluctance to accept this demand. Raja Bhag Singh and some other chiefs tried to bring about reconciliation between the husband and wife, but due to the adamant attitude of the Rani, their efforts failed. Raja Bhag Singh advised the Patiala chief to seek mediation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Accepting his advice, Raja Sahib Singh sent a special envoy, viz., Dhian Singh with a pearl necklace worth Rupees 60,000/- and Rupees 35,000/- in cash as presents to the Maharaja to seek his help in settling his family dispute. Ranjit Singh decided to take full advantage of this invitation and though the two intervening rivers, the Beas and the Sutlej were in floods at that time, he, accompanied by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, marched with his forces. After he had crossed the Sutlej (on 27th August) Raja Bhag Singh and Raja Jaswant Singh joined him. Meanwhile, on hearing the news of the advance of the Maharaja with his forces, the Rani thought it prudent to come to terms with her husband, seeking forgiveness. Accepting her apology, Raja Sahib Singh granted a *jagir* worth Rupees 50,000/- a year for her maintenance. Ranjit Singh reached Patiala on 5th September and in the course of his meeting with Raja Sahib Singh on the same day, the latter expressed his gratitude for the trouble taken by the Maharaja to comply with his request and explained to him the details of the compromise already arrived at with the Rani. The Maharaja, however, demanded the famous brass gun, *Karra Khan,* from the Raja before giving his approval of the terms of compromise. The Raja readily acceded to the demand. Ranjit Singh stayed at Patiala for about a fortnight and sent messages to various Cis-Sutlej chiefs to come to Patiala and offer their submission to him. All these chiefs except Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal responded favourably and paid *nazrana* to the Maharaja as a mark of their submission. The request of Sardar Jodh Singh of Kalsia to render military service in lieu of *nazrana* was accepted by the Maharaja.[57] A punitive expedition was despatched against Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, who was compelled to seek pardon through the intercession of Raja Bhag Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and pay *nazrana* of rupees 12,000. After this, the Maharaja by way of Ambala marched towards Naraingarh and his troops

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besieged the fort which was held by Mian Kishan Singh of Nahan. After a fierce battle in which Sardar Fateh Singh Kalianwala and many soldiers were killed, Kishan Singh left the fort and fled the battlefield. The fort was, thus captured. The Maharaja granted the fort and the estate of Naraingarh to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, who paid *nazrana* of rupees 12,000. On his return journey, the Maharaja conquered the estate of Morinda from Nihal Singh and conferred it on Raja Bhag Singh. He realized a *nazrana* of rupees 30,000 from Gopal Singh of Manimajra and Rupees 11,000/- from Deva Singh of Ropar.[58] He crossed the Sutlej on 26th September and after annexing all the possessions of late Tara Singh Ghaiba, he marched back to Lahore.

During these two Cis-Sutlej campaigns, Ranjit Singh had reaped a rich harvest. He had got territories and *nazrana* from a large number of Cis-Sutlej chiefs; he, however, distributed the spoils among his favourite chiefs.[59] *Nazrana* had been obtained by him from Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala, Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha, the Nawab of Malerkotla, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Gurdit Singh and Karam Singh of Shahabad, Rani Daya Kaur of Ambala, Bhagwan Singh of Buria, Jodh Singh of Kalsia and from many other petty chiefs or *zamindars* of the Cis-Sutlej region.[60] The grants made to the Cis-Sutlej chiefs also carried specific conditions including the acceptance of the supremacy of the Maharaja. Evidently, Ranjit Singh had established *de facto* suzerainty over the Sikh chiefs of the Sutlej-Yamuna region.[61] According to Cunningham, "Ranjit Singh laboured with more or less of intelligent design to give unity and coherence to diverse atoms and scattered elements; to mould the increasing Sikh nation into a well-ordered state or commonwealth as Gobind had developed a sect into a people."[62]

Samana Meeting of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs

Ranjit Singh's exactions from the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs greatly alarmed as well as disappointed them. They apprehended that their chiefships might be confiscated at any time by the ambitious Lahore Chief just as he had, on his return from the expeditions of their region, forcibly seized the estates of late Tara Singh Ghaiba although he had fought on the side of Ranjit Singh in the siege of Naraingarh. "They were, however, too weak individually to oppose him and too much divided to act together."[63] Under the circumstances, they thought of seeking help of the British against the aggressive designs of the Maharaja. To ponder over the matter and chalk out a common course of action, a meeting of the chiefs was convened at Samana, a town in the Patiala state in the first week of March 1808. It was attended by all the four major chiefs (of Patiala, Jind, Nabha and Kaithal) and five or six other chiefs. It was said in the course of discussion that they (Cis-Sutlej chiefs) were placed between two big ambitious powers – British in the East and Ranjit Singh in the West. The British had advanced upto the Yamuna river and they were likely to advance further towards their territories.

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Ranjit Singh also had the covetous eyes on their territories and his advance beyond the Sutlej was as sure as that of the British beyond the Yamuna. They had, therefore, to choose between the two evils. It was observed that the British were like the disease of tuberculosis, which brings gradual but sure death, and Ranjit Singh was like the disease of cholera or delirium *(sarsam)* which takes the life of the victim within hours. Consequently, it was resolved that they must seek alliance with the British as it would extend their lease of life, a little longer.[64] "Between the lion and the wolf, they had thus to come to terms with a stronger, when they decided to seek the British protection."[65]

Cis-Sutlej chiefs' Deputation to the British Resident

In accordance with the decision of the Samana meeting, a deputation of the Sikh chiefs consisting Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Diwan Chain Singh of Patiala, Munshi Gulam Hussan of Nabha, Sardar Bhagwan Singh of Jagadhri and Dulcha Singh of Radaur went to Delhi and met the British Resident Archibald Seton a number of times between 15th to 31st March 1808. They sought British help and protection against the incursions of Ranjit Singh. They pointed out that their ancestors had always sought protection from the power established at Delhi, because it possessed the supreme legitimate authority in the Cis-Sutlej region, that Ranjit Singh's intention was to subjugate their territories, and steps for self preservation were necessary for them and that if protection were granted to them, they would remain loyal to the British for ever. The British authorities at that time had been deliberately following the policy of non-intervention and they did not have a definite plan or policy in regard to intervention in the affairs of the Sikh chiefs. The British Resident, therefore, did not give any positive response to the deputationists and simply put them off by saying that he would refer their representation to the Governor-General.[66]

Ranjit Singh's Conciliation of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs

The Sikh deputationists had been disappointed by the vague and evasive replies of the British Resident Seton. They were now keen to contact Ranjit Singh in order to find out his intention about them. Ranjit Singh had also felt perturbed to know about the Sikh chiefs' meeting with the British Resident. He decided to conciliate them and, therefore, invited them to Lahore. The chiefs gladly accepted the invitation and all of them except Sardar Bhagwan Singh of Jagadhri reached Lahore. Ranjit Singh received them very cordially and gave them costly *khillats* and rich presents. He entertained them lavishly in order to win over their friendship and remove any feeling of ill will about him in their minds.[67]

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Metcalfe's Mission to Ranjit Singh

At this time Napolean's advances towards Asia apparently posed a danger to the British Empire in India. The French Emperor had signed a treaty with Persia in May 1807. This was followed by the Treaty of Tilsit concluded between Nepolean and Tsar Alexander I in July 1807. This Treaty is regarded as "the precipitating factor in Ranjit's relations with the British."[68] Under these circumstances, the British authorities in India were instructed to approach the rulers of Lahore, Kabul and Tehran to win them over against the impending Napolean's danger. Accordingly, C.T. Metcalfe was chosen to approach Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He met the Maharaja at Khem Karan near Kasur. He lost no time in placing before the Maharaja the proposal of an offensive and defensive alliance against France in the event of an invasion, which both the British and the Maharaja were interested in repelling. The Maharaja showed willingness to accept the proposal but he put forth two conditions, viz., that the British would not interfere in case he was involved in a war against the Amir of Kabul, and that the British should acknowledge his sovereignty over all Sikh states and people, including the Malwa Sikhs. Metcalfe had no authority to acccept these conditions. Consequently, Ranjit Singh broke off the negotiations and made his third inroad to the South of Sutlej.[69]

Third Cis-Sutlej Expedition of Ranjit Singh

On 26th December, 1808, Ranjit Singh hurriedly launched his third expedition across the Sutlej. Metcalfe accompanied him up to about 25 miles, south-east of Ludhiana. The Maharaja quickly conquered as much of the Cis-Sutlej country as he could. He subjugated Faridkot and Malerkotla. After this, he seized Ambala and Shahabad. He also exacted tribute from the chief of Thanesar. The chiefs of Jind, Nabha and Kaithal had joined the Maharaja in this campaign. According to Cunningham, Ranjit Singh even entered into a symbolic brotherhood of alliance with the Raja of Patiala with whom he had exchanged turbans.[70] Ranjit Singh's object in this campaign was to put pressure on the British so that they might accept his claim of sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej territories. "Metcalfe remained a passive spectator of the spoliation of the states which his government intended ultimately to protect."[71]

Removal of French Menace and Firmness of the British

According to Griffin, the policy of the Maharaja "was skilful, bold and deserved that success which it would probably have achieved, had the danger of a French invasion been a real and not an imaginary one."[72] But unfortunately for Ranjit Singh the danger of a French invasion soon disappeared. The Spanish insurrection against the French had broken out and England had established good relations with Persia,

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Russia and Turkey. Under the changed circumstances, the British Government no longer needed the friendship of Ranjit Singh and it decided to check the designs of Ranjit Singh in the Cis-Sutlej region boldly and firmly. Metcalfe was sent to meet the Maharaja again. The British envoy told the Maharaja frankly that the British Government did not approve the subjugation of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs by the Maharaja and that they were and would remain under the protection of the British Government. The Maharaja could not accept this proposition, which thwarted his most cherished ambition. The whole structure of his sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej area began to totter before his eyes and it seemed as if his dream of one Sikh State under him was being shattered to pieces. He believed, and perhaps rightly too, that being one of them, he had superior claims over the Sirhind chiefs than the British had. He believed further that he was engaged in a noble mission of uniting the scattered elements of the Khalsa community into a strong military power and that the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs must pull their weight together with those of the Punjab chiefs in the accomplishment of this national work.[73] Due to the adamant attitude of the British, Ranjit Singh ordered the mobilisation of his troops at Phillaur under Diwan Mokham Chand. It is said that Ranjit Singh even performed the ceremony of taking the field in an auspicious hour fixed by the Brahmins. But ultimately he yielded to the British demands and after some negotiations signed the treaty of Amritsar with the British on 25th April, 1809. "His failure to absorb the Cis-Sutlej states was a tragedy of Sikh militant nationalism and the success of the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs with the aid of the British Government marked the disruption of the great creation of Guru Gobind Singh."[74]

Proclamation of 3rd May, 1809

With the approval of the Governor-General-in-Council, Ochterlony announced to the chiefs of Malwa and Sirhind an *ittilahnama* (proclamation) on 3rd May, 1809. It was laid down that the country of Cis-Sutlej chiefs having come under the protection of the British Government, would in future be secured from the 'authority and control' of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; that the chiefs thus taken under protection would be exempted from all pecuniary tribute to the British Government; that they would exercise the same rights and authority within their own possessions which they enjoyed hitherto; that they would furnish the British force with supplies of grain and other necessaries whenever it happened to pass through their country; and that they would join the British army with their forces in case of an attack from an enemy for the purpose of conquering the country.[75] These terms were obviously quite favourable to the Cis-Sutlej chiefs; no subsidiary forces were to be maintained by these chiefs nor were the contingents of forces definitely fixed with which each of them was to join the British army, nor were they to pay any tribute to the British. The object of Minto's

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Government was apparently no more than "to establish an autonomous and loyal confederacy of the chiefs who would be helpful to the protecting power in difficult times."[76] It may also be noted that the general proclamation issued "for the satisfaction of the chiefs of the country of Malwa and Sirhind" was, a unilateral action on the part of the British authority, which placed the British relations with these states on a peculiar footing.

The Treaty of Amritsar (25th April, 1809), followed by the proclamation of 3rd May, 1809, may be regarded as a great diplomatic triumph of the British. They had successfully maneuvered to extend their north-western frontier from the Yamuna to the Sutlej and, at the same time, by pursuing adroitly the policy of 'divide and rule' they had torpedoed the establishment of a formidable Sikh State just on their head, which could have otherwise proved a constant source of potent danger to the security of the British empire in India on the western front. Ranjit Singh's dream of a united Sikh State under his sovereignty had been shattered once for all and a permanent wedge had been created between the Majha and Malwa Sikhs, which ruined all chances of Sikh unity. The Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs are generally blamed for the unfortunate state of affairs for the Sikh community. They have been accused of depriving Ranjit Singh of about half of resources of the Sikhs which could have been otherwise utilized by him for consolidating the power of the whole Sikh community. Their act of casting their lot with the British instead of Ranjit Singh has even been dubbed as anti-national.

On the other hand, it has been contended that Ranjit Singh by his nakedly aggressive designs had himself alienated the Sikh chiefs across the Sutlej. His three successive Cis-Sutlej expeditions leading to seizure of territories and exaction of *nazrana* from these chiefs of his own community, had alarmed all of them and created an 'earthquake' in the Cis-Sutlej region. Had the Maharaja tactfully won over the four principal Sikh chiefs of the area by 'friendship' rather than 'frown' as he had done in the case of his friend and ally Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, the situation might have been reversed in favour of Ranjit Singh and the Sikh community at large. Under the existing circumstances, they naturally thought that an alignment with the British would ensure the continuance of the existence of their chiefships as far as could be foreseen, and hence by choosing the lesser evil they joined hands with the British out of sheer frustration. In doing so they had, of course, preferred their self-interests to the larger interests of the community. But it may be said in their extenuation, that in the early nineteenth century when the spirit of nationalism had been conspicuous by its absence, all the chiefs including the Maratha, Rajput and Jat princes had been pursuing their self-interests in preference to national interests; and the Sikh chiefs were no exception.

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Relationship between the Cis-Sutlej Sikh Chiefs and Ranjit Singh (1809-1839)

After having come under the British protection, the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs ceased to have any political relationship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The latter had also been prevented from interfering into the territories of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs by the terms of the Treaty of Amritsar. Nevertheless, there was bound to be some sort of connection between the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs and the Lahore Darbar. First, there was a religious and cultural affinity between the Sikhs of Cis-Sutlej area and those of the Trans-Sutlej region. Amritsar was the most sacred place, the Mecca so to say, of the Sikhs, and the Sikhs everywhere considered it their religious duty to undertake pilgrimage to the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar — and the Sikh chiefs of the Sutlej-Yamuna Doab were no exception. Whenever the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs or their emissaries visited Amritsar, Ranjit Singh made suitable arrangements for their reception and in return these chiefs or their agents paid due respect to the Maharaja. Secondly, quite a large number of Sikhs belonging to the Cis-Sutlej region had been recruited in the army of Ranjit Singh and through them some sort of link had been inevitably established between the chiefs of this area and the Lahore Darbar. Thirdly, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had established a vast kingdom in the Sutlej-Sindh region and had distinguished himself as the most powerful and popular Sikh ruler. The chiefs of Cis-Sutlej region spontaneously developed great regards and respect for him. It is also significant to observe that some of these chiefs had also stationed their *vakils* in the Lahore Darbar — a fact which was not to the liking of the British Government.

It will be pertinent to mention some important instances of the connections that continued to subsist between Ranjit Singh and the Cis-Sutlej states of note after 1809 and the reaction of the British authorities, if any, thereto. It has already been said that Ranjit Singh had been very close with Raja Bhag Singh of Jind. It was the Raja who had dissuaded him successfully from joining the Marathas against the British and inspired Ranjit Singh to lead Cis-Sutlej expeditions as a result of which he acquired for himself ample share of the spoils of conquest. At the same time, the Raja had played a leading role in bringing the Cis-Sutlej chiefs under the British protection. He had proved himself a highly successful diplomat who had gained from his connections both with Ranjit Singh and the British. He continued to enjoy the confidence of his nephew after 1809. He was the first Sikh chief who had realized the importance of seeking alliance with the British, for he had formed a true estimate of their military strength. Perhaps his influence on Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as well as his example, was an important factor in moulding the pro-British propensity and policy of the Maharaja in the years to come.[77] He was a prominent Cis-Sutlej chief who participated in the marriage of Kanwar Kharak Singh in 1812 and had presented an elephant and '*shagun*'

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of Rupees 11,000/- on this occasion.[78] The successor of Raja Bhag Singh, Raja Fateh Singh (1819-22), continued to have friendly relations with the Maharaja. The latter had received him cordially during his two visits to Lahore, first as Kanwar in 1817 and second as Raja in 1819.[79]

Most typical was the connection that developed between Raja Sangat Singh of Jind (1822-34) and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Both the relatives had a great liking for each other. The Raja aspired to pay frequent visits to the Lahore Chief and the Maharaja, on his part, also harboured great affection for his young nephew and was always pleased to meet him. Sangat Singh paid his first visit to Lahore in 1826. He was received warmly by the Maharaja and was entertained lavishly. Both of them took part in holy festivities and many officials of the Maharaja gave him rich presents. Before the Raja departed, the Maharaja conferred upon him the *jagir* of Rain in Jalandhar-Doab consisting of twelve villages worth Rupees 13,000/-. Next year, Sangat Singh visited Lahore for the second time. He was cordially welcomed by the Maharaja who granted him *jagir* of Muhrampur and Musapur worth Rupees 10,500/-. The Raja was also granted the village Antiana situated on the south of the Sutlej. When the Raja took possession of this village, its founder Ram Singh strongly protested and lodged a complaint to the British authorities seeking their help in the restoration of his estate.[80]

Raja Sangat Singh's repeated visits to Lahore and his acceptance of *jagirs* from the Maharaja were disliked and disapproved by the British authorities who decided to put a stop to this 'connection and allegiance'. The Governor-General remarked in this regard, "It is a fundamental principle of our alliance with the states and chiefs of that class to require them to abstain from all connections or intercourse with foreign powers and Governments excepting such as may be of complimentary nature, without full knowledge and sanction of Local British authority." Raja Sangat Singh was compelled to restore the village Antiana immediately to its rightful owner, Ram Singh and the British Government dispensed a stern warning to him that as a protected dependant of the British Government he was not at liberty to enter into correspondence or negotiation with a foreign power and that the grant or purchase of any estate from the chief of Lahore without any reference to the Government was 'highly indelicate and improper'. The Jind Raja was, however, allowed to retain the Trans-Sutlej *jagirs* that had been granted to him by the Maharaja.[81]

Despite this order of the British Government, the intimate connection between the two relatives did not, perhaps could not, cease. The Raja's *vakils* and agents continued to remain in attendance at the Lahore Darbar and the Raja continued to pay visits to the Maharaja with unabated enthusiasm, though they were generally of a complimentary nature.[82] The Raja seemed more anxious to remain on good terms

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with Ranjit Singh than with the English Government.[83] In February 1831, the Raja visited Lahore in response to an invitation from Ranjit Singh. Rich presents were exchanged between the two and the Maharaja evinced usual courtesy and cordiality towards his Jind guest.[84] In May 1831 and again in the autumn of 1833, Diwan Singh, a reliable agent of Raja Sangat Singh, visited the Maharaja with costly presents and a letter from the Jind Raja assuring of his loyalty and obedience to the Maharaja.[85]

In 1834, Raja Sangat Singh in response to a special invitation from Maharaja Ranjit Singh proceeded towards Lahore for participating in the celebration of the Dusehra festival. When he reached Bassian, he was called back by the orders of the British authorities. The young Raja was so much frustrated on receiving the orders on 2nd November 1834 that he fell seriously ill. The next day arrangement was made to take him to Sangrur in his palanquin but before he came out of the gate of Bassian, he expired suddenly at the young age of twenty-four years[86] – a victim of good-will of Ranjit Singh and ill-will of the British.

None of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs was perhaps better satisfied with the new relationship created by the British proclamation (3rd May 1809) than Raja Sahib Singh, the capricious and imbecile ruler of Patiala, for he had been sick of the incursions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had, therefore, no communications with the latter during the remaining years (1809-13) of his rule. Moreover, due to his mal-administration the British authorities intervened authoritatively in the affairs of Patiala to improve the deteriorating condition of administration. During the reign of his successor, Karam Singh (1813-45) no event of importance took place in Patiala State's relations with the Maharaja except the occasional good-will visits of Patiala emissaries to the Lahore Darbar. For instance, in 1827 Raja Karam Singh sent his loyal official Tek Singh to Lahore. The envoy met Maharaja Ranjit Singh and offered him several presents including a horse with golden saddle on behalf of the ruler of Patiala. Suitable arrangements were made for the entertainment of Tek Singh and a message of thanks was communicated to the Patiala Chief by the Maharaja through the envoy.[87] Soon after, on receiving an invitation from the Maharaja of Lahore, Raja Karam Singh again sent Tek Singh to Lahore. The Maharaja met him in seclusion and expressed feelings of friendship and affection for the Raja of Patiala. Before Tek Singh was seen off, the Maharaja presented him some cash amount and a *siropa* of nine garments and also sent a *siropa* of seventeen garments for Raja Karam Singh. Tek Singh happily returned to his State with friendly messages and presents from the Maharaja for his master.[88] After the departure of Tek Singh, the Raja of Rajouri reached the Lahore Darbar and offered three hawks which were sent by the Maharaja to the Patiala Chief as a gesture of good-will and another to Raja Sangat Singh of Jind.[89] It further gave evidence of friendly relations between the Patiala State and Lahore Darbar.

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Raja Jaswant Singh (1783-1840) of Nabha had been quite friendly with Maharaja Ranjit Singh after the settlement of Doladhi village dispute (1806) between Patiala and Nabha. In the later Cis-Sutlej expeditions of the Maharaja, he had sided with him for which he was rewarded with the grant of some territories by the latter. As already mentioned, after the proclamation of 3rd May 1809, Jaswant Singh had been granted a special *sanad* by the British authorities in 1810. In the month of June that year, a conflict arose between the Nabha State and the Lahore Darbar over the village Jaitoki situated in the vicinity of Kot Kapura. Raja Jaswant Singh complained to Ochterlony that Ranjit Singh's officials had made collections from this village which belonged to Nabha. Diwan Mohkam Chand, however, put forth the claim of the Lahore Darbar over the village. After enquiring the whole matter Ochterlony came to the conclusion that the Chief of Nabha had been in actual possession of the disputed village for the last fifteen years. Thus the claim of the Lahore Darbar over the village was set aside and that of Raja of Nabha was accepted.[90]

After the settlement of this dispute, no cause of conflict arose between the Raja of Nabha and the Maharaja of Lahore and friendly relations were practically established between the two. In 1811 Raja Jaswant Singh attended the ceremony of the marriage of Prince Kharak Singh, the eldest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and presented rupees eleven thousand along with an elephant on the auspicious occasion. On the eve of the Raja's departure the Maharaja presented to him some precious gifts as a token of thanks.[91] In 1819, Raja Jaswant Singh paid a visit to Amritsar to pay his obeisance to Harmandir Sahib. He met Maharaja Ranjit Singh who happened to be in Amritsar at that time. The Maharaja was pleased to meet the Nabha Chief and both of them exchanged feelings of amity and friendship.[92] Soon after the Raja of Nabha sent his *vakil,* Dal Singh to the Lahore Darbar with certain presents for the Maharaja. This visit of the *vakil* helped in strengthening the friendly relations between the Nabha chiefship and Lahore Darbar.[93] Sometime in 1827 (Sambat 1884) Raja Jaswant Singh on his return from the pilgrimage to Jwala Mukhi visited Amritsar and met the Maharaja. Both the Sikh rulers exchanged presents. The Nabha Chief acquainted the Maharaja with the state of affairs in the Cis-Sutlej region and the latter extended his blessings and best wishes to the former.[94] Sohan Lal Suri has recorded some similar incidents of the later years when Raja Jaswant Singh and the Maharaja of Lahore held cordial meetings, exchanged presents and celebrated the festivals of Diwali and Dusehra together in the holy city of Amritsar.[95]

Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal also maintained friendly and cordial relations with the Maharaja after 1809. He visited the Lahore Darbar occasionally, notably on the occasion of the marriage of Kanwar Kharak Singh. He presented an elephant and rupees 11,000 on this auspicious ceremony. Ranjit Singh granted him *jagir* and gave some gifts on the

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eve of his departure.[96]

Jodh Singh of Kalsia had offered to render military service to the Maharaja instead of offering him *nazrana* in 1808. After 1809, too, he continued to be loyal and faithful to the Maharaja rendering military service to the latter from time to time. For example in 1814, on the orders of Ranjit Singh he participated in the campaign to Pir Panjal (in connection with second Kashmir expedition of the Maharaja) along with Dal Singh, Diwan Ram Dayal and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. [97] Again the Maharaja specially called him to join the Multan expedition of 1818. The Kalsia Chief joined the Sikh forces along with his son Sobha Singh and 10-20 horsemen.[98] He had also been visiting the Lahore Darbar on many other occasions with presents to the Maharaja and the latter received him warmly every time, giving him return gifts. Likewise, the Chief of Ladwa, Sardar Jit Singh paid visits to Lahore to pay his respects to the Sikh Maharaja. For example in 1827, he met the Maharaja at Lahore and presented to him a fine horse. He was entertained lavishly in accordance with the instructions of the Maharaja.[99]

The Cis-Sutlej States, the British and the Lahore Kingdom – The Finale

Whereas the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs maintained quite cordial relations with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, they also remained fully loyal and faithful to the British. Various Cis-Sutlej chiefs rendered necessary material assistance in terms of money and forces during the wars into which the British East India Company was involved from time to time. For instance, in the course of the Gorkha War (1814-16) the Patiala and Nabha Chiefs aided the British Government with troops or carriage and supplies.[100] In spite of the unquestionable allegiance and loyalty of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs, the British authorities did not miss any opportunity to annex the territories of their chiefships on one pretext or the other. During the decade 1824-34 many estates in the Cis-Sutlej region such as Ambala, Radaur, Jagadhri, Dhanaura, portion of Buria, Bilaspur, portion of Shahabad, Sarai Lashkari Khan, Doodia, Sadhaura and portion of Thanesar lapsed to the British Government for want of male heirs.[101] After the death of Raja Sangat Singh of Jind (Nov 1834), the territories of the State comprising Ludhiana, Morinda, Bassian, half-share in Mudki and Jandiala (146 villages in all) lapsed to the British Government and Raja Sarup Singh was allowed to succeed to only that portion of the chiefship which had been the possession of Gajpat Singh.[102] Maharaja Ranjit Singh was only a mute and helpless spectator to the annexation of these chiefships in an unjust manner.

It is significant to observe that Maharaja Ranjit Singh was having quite friendly relations with the British during all these years. A shrewd statesman – a realist par

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excellence — he had fully realized the importance and value of keeping up friendship with the powerful British Government. He had also gained considerably due to the goodwill of the British. His eastern frontier having become secure on account of their goodwill, he had applied his whole energy and efforts in the conquests of western and north-western territories and had succeeded in conquering Attock, Multan, Kashmir, Derajat, Peshawar, etc. Although, he had been unhappy with the British authorities for not recognising what he considered his legitimate claim of sovereignty over the Cis-Sutlej territories of Ferozepur, Sialba etc., yet with the coming of Wade as British Political Agent at Ludhiana in 1827, the British authorities became more considerate in regard to his claims in certain Cis-Sutlej estates. Due to Wade's influence Ranjit Singh's claim over Wadni, Anandpur-Makhowal, Machhiwara, Naraingarh, Jagraon, etc., was recognized by the British Government.[103]

The death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 created a vacuum in the Lahore kingdom. His successors were weak and inefficient which resulted in intrigues and murders in the Lahore Darbar and chaos and confusion in the kingdom – a situation of which the British authorities took full advantage. Under these circumstances, the relationship between the Cis-Sutlej chiefs with the Lahore kingdom virtually ceased. In 1845-46, took place the First Anglo-Sikh War. During this war, many of the Sikh chiefs did not remain faithful to the British Government. Almost every village in the Cis-Sutlej region had some relatives in the Sikh army of the Lahore Darbar, and as such "the hearts of the Sikh population in our protected States were with the men of their own tribe and sect, and decidedly averse to the British Government."[104] And the Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs also, by and large, had sympathies with the Khalsa army. Actuated by their personal interests which were considered to be bound up with the success of the British, the chiefs of Patiala, Jind and Faridkot, of course, evinced their loyalty to the British cause and rendered all possible assistance to their paramount. But other Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs vacillated or adopted definitely hostile attitude. The Raja of Nabha withheld supplies and neglected to attend to the requisition of the Agent to Governor General. The Chief of Kapurthala also failed to furnish supplies from his Cis-Sutlej estates, and his troops fought against the British at Aliwal and Budhowal. Many small Cis-Sutlej chiefs positively supported the Sikhs with their troops in various battles of war.[105]

After the close of the war, the British Government rewarded obedience and punished disobedience. Whereas, the Chiefs of Patiala, Jind and Faridkot were rewarded with additions in their territories, the other Chiefs suffered for what was regarded as their disloyal conduct. Raja Devindar Singh of Nabha was deposed and one-fourth of the territory of the State was confiscated. The Chief of Kapurthala was deprived of his Cis-Sutlej estates. The petty chiefships of Ladwa, Ropar and

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Anandpur were liquidated and the whole of their territories confiscated by the British authorities. Many petty Chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej region were deprived of their sovereign powers and it was ruled that in lieu of military service which they were bound to render, they would be required to pay a commutation tax at the rate of 12½ per cent of their respective income. Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot and Kalsia (as also the petty States of Mamdot, Dialgarh and Raikot, which afterwards lapsed to the British Government) were exempted from the operation of this rule. The Sikh chiefs including the Phulkian chiefs were obliged to renounce forever the right to levy excise and transit duties in their territories. They were also bound to get the approval and consent of their respective Commissioner for giving capital sentences.[106]

When the second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) broke out, the chiefs of Patiala, Jind, Kapurthala and Faridkot offered their services to the British Government, which were utilized to some extent in the form of carriage and supplies.[107] After the annexation of the Punjab, Dalhousie's Government deprived many petty Cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs of all civil, criminal and fiscal jurisdictions, reducing them to the position of 'ordinary subjects of the British Government in possession of certain exceptional privileges'.[108] But the chiefs of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Kapurthala, Fardikot and Kalsia were allowed to exercise, as usual, their rights and authority. Whereas the Lahore kingdom was annexed by the British in 1849, these principal Sikh States continued to exist for another well-nigh a century.

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– Dr Anju Suri

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1 H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. IV (New Delhi, 1982), preface, p. x.

2 N.K. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power* (Calcutta, 1936), p. 68.

3 These eight *misls* were — The Ahluwalia Misl, Bhangi Misl, Ramgarhia Misl, Faizalpuria Misl, Kanhaiya Misl, Sukerchakia Misl, Dallewalia Misl and Nakkai Misl.

4 George Forster had observed "Should any future cause call for the combined efforts of the Sikhs to maintain the existence of empire and religion, we may see some ambitious Chief led on by his genius and success and absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy." See George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, 1783-1784, Vol. I, (London, 1798), p. 295.

5 Punjab Administration Report 1849-51, cited in S.N. Rao, "Cis-Sutlej Sikh States 1800-1849" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Panjab University, Chandigah, 1953), p. 5.

6 During Guru Har Rai's travels in the Cis-Sutlej region, Chaudhri Kala accompanied by his two nephews, Phul and Sandali, had come to pay his obeisance to the Guru in 1654. Seeing the young boy Phul placing his hands on his hungry stomach, the Guru blessed him, saying, "the steeds of his descendants shall drink water as far as the Jamna; they shall have sovereignty for many generations, and be honoured in proportion as they serve the Guru." See M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. VI (Oxford, 1909), p. 294; L.H. Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab* (Reprint Patiala, 1970), p. 6; Ganda Singh, *Patiala and East Panjab States Union Historical Background* (Patiala, 1951), p. 45.
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11 Griffin, *op. cit.,* p. 51.
12 Amar Singh's death in the very prime of his life was 'the greatest misfortune that could befall the Patiala house'. N.K. Sinha, *op. cit.,* p. 134.
13 H.R. Gupta, *op. cit.,* p. 166.
14 For example, one of the queer hobbies of Sahib Singh was that he used to arrange and enjoy the mock fightings between two groups of boys representing Ranjit Singh's forces and British forces, respectively, and he would give compensation to the families of those boys who were wounded or killed in such fightings.
15 Towards the closing years of Sahib Singh's reign the Patiala State had extensive territories which included the *parganas* of Bathinda, Hudiaya, Barnala, Sherpur, Sunam, Mansurpur, Dhodhian, Munak, Dirbah, Samana, Sanaur, Patiala, Ghanaur, Rajgarh, Murdanpur, Lalru, Rohru, Banur, Chhat, Sirhind, Payal, Amargarh, Lasoi and Ghuram. See Khushwaqat rai, *Tawarikh-i-Sikhan*, M.S., p. 120, cited in Bhagat Singh, *op. cit.,* p. 319.
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ANGLO-SIKH RELATIONS (1800-1838)

It was in 1800, a few months after the Maharaja's occupation of Lahore on 6th July, 1799, that the first contact occurred between him and the British. A Muslim, Yusaf Ali arrived at the Lahore Darbar as a British envoy to warn the Maharaja to be cautious of the overtures of Shah Zaman of Kabul.

By the time, Yusaf Ali reached Lahore, Shah Zaman was no longer on the throne of Kabul and the British called back his envoy. No attempt was made by either side to start negotiation to reach some sort of settlement.

Towards the beginning of the 19th century, the conflict started between the two giants, the British and the Marathas to establish hegemony on India. The two chiefs Mahadji Scindia and Jaswant Rao Holkar requested Ranjit Singh to help against the British. Out of the two, Scindia was the first to approach Ranjit Singh through his French General Peron and Bourquin. Ranjit Singh pleaded his inability to oblige him. Shortly after, Scindia was defeated by the British and his power collapsed.

Jaswant Rao Holkar suffered defeat at Fatehgarh and Dig in December 1804, and arrived in the Punjab along with his Pindare friend and ally Amir Khan. He was being pursued by the British commander-in-chief Lord Lake. He requested Ranjit Singh for help. General Lake wrote to Ranjit Singh that if he would accede to his request, he would be responsible for the consequences. Ranjit Singh was jittery at first and then he called a meeting of *Gurumata* at Amritsar[1] to take any definitive decision.

The majority of the members, including Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sada Kaur advised Ranjit Singh not to spoil relations with the British. The Maharaja's response was Pauline as he advised Holkar to settle terms with the British and live in peace. On December 24, 1805, some sort of understanding reached between Holkar and the English.

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In 1806, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, got in touch with Lord Lake and treaty of friendship was signed between the British and Ranjit Singh. The British army retreated immediately after that. By this agreement, the Sikh signatories bound themselves to compel Holkar to leave Amritsar. The British government in return, agreed not to enter the territories of the Sikh chieftains as long as they abstained from entertaining with its enemies. The treaty, however, carried no political significance because it did not result in the establishment of any intimate or lasting contact between the two parties, the British and the Sikhs. The only importance of this treaty was that it brought the English in regular contact with the Sikhs.

The Maharaja's alliance with the English was an act of wisdom. At this juncture, the Maharaja's state was in infancy, very much in need of proper care and nurture. Holkar was militarily very weak, financially a broke accompanied by a band of untrained and indisciplined soldiers. An alliance with him would have put Ranjit's kingdom in great risk because in that case, he would have to encounter the enmity of the British who at that point of time had far efficient war machine and logistical resources. Under the circumstances, it was indeed his political sagacity that he saved Punjab from becoming battleground between the English and the Sikhs.

In 1806 and 1807, Ranjit Singh had two expeditions into the Cis-Sutlej region. He had already established his hegemony in Trans-Sutlej region. Now he wanted to establish his suzerainty over the Cis-Sutlej. His chieftains were to consummate his long-cherished dream of becoming the ruler of the whole Sikh populace. The expedition of 1806 was led to settle a minor dispute between the Maharaja of Patiala and Raja of Nabha. Both of them approached Maharaja for help. The Maharaja took the opportunity as an opportune one and decided to march towards the Cis-Sutlej areas along with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Gurdit Singh Ladwa and a few other Sikh *sardars*. A force of 20,000 soldiers was with him which was too big for the problem he was invited to solve. He invaded and occupied the town of Doladi. He then gave Doladi, due to which, the dispute had risen between Patiala and Nabha, to Nabha and exacted a heavy tribute from Patiala. The Rajas of Jind and Nabha paid him *nazrana*.

On his way back, Ranjit Singh wiped out the Muhamedan family of Ludhiana and occupied Dakha, Raikot, Jagraon and Ghungrana. These territories were bestowed upon his followers and all those *sardars* who were willing to accept his suzerainty.

In 1807, Ranjit Singh found another opportunity to march into the Cis-Sutlej region. This time there was a quarrel between Aus Kaur, the queen of Patiala and her husband Sahib Singh, the ruler of Patiala. She wanted a big *jagir* for her minor son Karam Singh. Her husband was averse to her demand. She invited Ranjit Singh to intervene and prevail upon her husband to respond to her solicitation. In return, she

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would give him a costly necklace and a lot of money and the brass gun *Karra-Khan*. Ranjit Singh accepted the invitation and marched to reach Patiala. But before he crossed the river Sutlej, the husband and wife themselves settled the dispute. The Maharaja reached Patiala and forced Aus Kaur to fulfill her promise of delivering necklace and brass gun to him.

From Patiala he proceeded to Ambala from whose chief, Rani Daya Kaur, he realized tribute. He marched against Naraingarh and seized it after a brief fight. He handed it over to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. He then seized the territories of the Dallewali chief in the Doab, wiped out Nishanwalia Misl by occupying their territories. The fortress and estate of Ghungrana, Morinda in the *Pargana* of Sirhind were conquered. Zira was occupied and Kot Kapura owned by Buria family was taken possession of, and finally Dharamkot belonging to the deceased Ghaiba was seized. He also realized tributes from Lal Singh of Kaithal, from Jodh Singh of Kalsia and many other*sardars* and *zamindars*, the long list of whom is given by Diwan Amar Nath in his treatise *Zafarnama Ranjit Singh*.

It has been estimated that on this way, Ranjit Singh acquired an area with an annual income of Rs. 400,518/- comprising the *Pargana* of Ludhiana and parts of Rahimabad, Sirhind, Tahara, Barna, Pyul and Rahioo and the *Taluqas* of Ghungrana, Shergah, Dharamkot, Jagraon, Jhand won, Kot, Chandpur, Talwandi and Dhanivuar. Almost all of these newly won territories were given away to his own followers and the Cis-Sutlej chiefs who accepted his suzerainty.

The Jind ruler obtained 90 villages with annual revenue of Rs. 41,700/- in the *parganas* of Ludhiana, Sirhind and *Taluqas* of Jhandiala, Kot, Jagraon, Busia and Ghangrana. Jaswant Singh, the Raja of Nabha received 38 villages worth Rs. 36,000/- as annual revenue. Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was granted 106 villages in the *Taluqas* of Dakha, Kot, Basia Jagraon and Talwandi exceeding annual revenue of Rs. 40,505/-. Sardar Gurdit Singh of Ladwa received 12 villages in the Taluqas of Baddowal, Jagraon and Ghungrana. Diwan Mohkam Chand was assigned 102 villages in the *Taluqas* of Zira, Kot Kapura, Dharamkot worth Rs. 68,900/- annually. Sardar Garba Singh obtained 62 villages exceeding annual revenue of Rs. 22634/- in the *Taluqa* of Dharamkot. Sardar Karam Singh Nagla obtained 36 villages in the *Taluqa* of Ghungrana worth Rs. 23,415/- annually. Other beneficiaries were Basant Singh (a few villages worth 4010 rupees) Jodh Singh (Territories worth Rs. 4200), Jodh Singh Kalsia (territories worth Rs. 10000/-) and Rani Sada Kaur (Wadni).[2]

The political impact of the two Malwa expeditions was instantaneous. The distribution of occupied areas was the shrewd Maharaja's move to earn the goodwill of major chiefs. He had accepted fealty of the chiefs of the region of Malerkotla, Kaithal, Buria, Shahbad, Kalsia, Rani of Ambala. He had virtually established a

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de facto suzerainty of the Lahore Darbar over the entire Sikh county.

The apparent subservience of the chiefs of Cis-Sultej region was deceptive. They perceived clearly that the mighty Ranjit Singh would ultimately wipe them off. This fear united them to deliberate upon their impending fate.

They met at Samana and decided to lead a deputation to Delhi in March 1808 to solicit British aid and protection against the master of Lahore. Archibald Seton, the British resident at Delhi, on instruction from his government, told them that their fear was unfounded. "The British government has no reason to quarrel with Ranjit Singh. It is not possible that Ranjit Singh had plans to finish their existence."[3]

As a matter of policy, the British Government at this time was averse to enter into any arrangement with the Cis-Sultej chiefs and put them off with an evasive answer.[4] All this disappointed and discouraged the chiefs and they now thought it an act of probity to go to Lahore and to Maharaja.

The British at this time considered the Jamuna the limit of its empire in North West and made no claim, formal or informal, to the territories westward of that river. The reaction against the forward policy of Lord Wellesely was still vilirant and the keynotes of the prevalent policy were withdrawal and restraint.[5]

This attitude of the British had genesis in two factors. First the Board of East India Company had gone almost financially broke because of forward policy of Wellesely which involved the British in war against native rulers. Second, there was a supposed threat of French invasion of India. Since Lord Minto's arrival in India in July 1807, the reports of French intrigues in Persia sent by Sir John Malcolm, the British ambassador in Persia had alarmed the Indian government. Malcolm reported to the Home government about the shady dealings of the French embassy in Tehran, the growth of unhealthy influence inimical to the British interests and the proposed march of the French armies through central Asia Minor and Persia, to finally attack India and occupy British Empire.

The Home government believed these reports and considered French menace as positive threat to the British possessions in India. In September 1807, the Select Committee directed the Indian government to take steps immediately to counteract the lurking French menace.

The reports of Malcolm were a compendium of inaccurate facts, yet it caused Franco phobia to grip the minds of the British authorities. Treaty of Tilsit between Napoleon and Russia marked the apogee of Napoleon's power. According to this treaty, Russia pledged that if England continued hostilities against France, Russia would join the French in combating her.

Although British Navy commanded the seas, the land route to India through Persia, Afghanistan and Punjab was open to the Franco-Russian armies. The attack

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on India was a remote possibility because it was not easy for Napoleon to march to India while enroute, there were countries who did not express their fealty or willingness to join him in his project. Still the government of India had to move as per the direction of Home Government. Lord Minto, the Governor General of India (1807-13) under orders from the Home Government decided to reverse the policy of non-intervention beyond the river Jamuna and to seek alliances beyond the river Indus with Afghanistan, Persia, Lahore and Sindh. For this purpose, Elphinstone was sent to Kabul and Charles Metcalfe to Lahore.

All this was done to throw up barriers against the Napoleonic expeditions which threatened the security of the Company's Indian possessions.

On July 1808, Lord Minto sent Metcalfe to Lahore with a two-fold purpose, first to counter the French designs and second to check Ranjit Singh's aggressive policy in the Cis-Sutlej states. The purpose in the words of Lord Minto was to woo the great Raja, "to forge alliance while refusing in the increase of territory on which he had set his heart"[6]

Metcalfe met Ranjit Singh at Kasur on the 15th September, 1807, and asked for a mutual defensive alliance for the protection of the Punjab and the British possessions in India against the apprehended invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte[7] and, as part of proposed agreement, demanded temporarily some concessions essential to the prevention of a defensive war against the enemy. The Maharaja was skeptical about the bona fides of the British.[8]

Even then, the Maharaja asked him to submit a written draft treaty that he wanted to be consummated. Metcalfe submitted the same, outlining the following terms:-

i) Both Ranjit Singh and the English would join their defenses against France; Ranjit Singh would check Napoleon from passing through the Punjab in case he would invade India.

ii) Ranjit Singh would extend the protection to the British messengers passing through his territory.

Terms of the treaty were totally British interest based and they reflected no interest or much less concern for Ranjit Singh's aspirations to be recognized as the sovereign of the whole Sikh nation. The Maharaja expressed to Faqir Aziz-ud-din, as to how selfish the British were. The Maharaja presented Metcalfe with a draft of counter proposals. This had three clauses: First, the British should extend most favoured nation treatment to the Darbar, the Afganistan was not to be given preference, nor should the British enter into any alliance with the rulers of Bahawalpur and Multan; seecond, Ranjit Singh's suzerainty over the whole of the Sikh nation was to be recognized, third, the British were not to entertain any disaffected Sikh chiefs or

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meddle with the traditions of the Khalsa *ji*; and alliance should be in perpetuity.[9]

Metcalfe was willing to make the alliance perpetual but expressed his inability to agree to the clause which demanded recognition of his suzerainty over the whole Sikh nation including Cis-Sultej chiefs. His reply was that, it was not within his competence. But, he promised to refer the matter to the Governor General, which he immediately did. While doing so he expressed emphatically – I take the liberty of expressing my opinion, "that if it is in view to attach Ranjit Singh to the British government and to make a friend by conciliation, the concession which he requires is essentially necessary for that purpose. As long as the British government appears to be the bars and the only bar, to his subjugations of the Sikhs and consequent aggrandizement he will not, I conceive, be cordially attached to it, and if his attachment is gained by any means, without which all other to obtain his cooperation by conciliations would probably be fruitless."[10] Pending the reply of the Governor General, Ranjit Singh decided to lead another expedition into the Cis-Sultej region and to force the issue by presenting the British with a fate accomplish. On 26th September, 1808, Ranjit Singh moved off with his army towards the Beas, directing Matcalfe to follow. He crossed the Sutlej in October 1808 and captured Faridkot, a Patiala territory. Malerkotla was made to pay tribute, Ambala was seized from Rani Daya Kaur. He fell upon Shahbad and occupied it. Mehtab Singh, the chief of Thanesar, tendered his submission.

Sahib Singh, the Raja of Patiala exchanged turbans with him as a mark of brotherhood. Ranjit Singh returned from his expedition on 4th December, 1808. Ranjit Singh had given proof that the land between Jamuna and the Sultej was under his control and almost all the chieftains of the area acknowledged his suzerainty all through the course of the Malwa expedition. Metcalfe continued negotiations with Ranjit Singh but could not clinch anything substantial in regard to the defensive alliance on British terms. From Ghungrana, he stopped journeying with him.

Ranjit Singh, writes Griffin, "clearly kept the envoy in his camp to weaken the resistance of the chiefs and to receive some sort of official sanction for his enterprises."[11]

According to M. Latif, the "object of Lahore ruler was to gain time and trick the envoy."[12]

Finding Ranjit Singh intransigence to respond to the British overtures to enter into defensive alliance and his insistence to establish his overlordship on the chieftains in Cis-Sultej region, the British re-appraised their policy towards Ranjit Singh. In this context, they struck a complete somersault or renewal of policy. The former British posture of indifference towards the Cis-Sultej states was now replaced by one of keen interest in the area. They made decision to take Cis-Sultej rulers under British

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protection and to drive Ranjit Singh beyond the Sultej in the second weak of November 1808, when Metcalfe was still at Ghungrana. On the 10th December, 1808, Metcalfe presented to the Maharaja a letter from the Governor General followed by another note saying, "His lordship has learned with great surprise and concern that the Maharaja's aim at the subjugation of chiefs who have long been considered under the protection of the power ruling north of Hindustan and to more especially to find the Maharaja requires the assent of the British Government to the execution of the design. By the issue of war with the Marathas, the British government became possessed of the power and right formerly exercised by that nation in the north of Hindustan."[13]

Ranjit Singh did not reply to the ultimate immediately and, in the meanwhile, began to contact the Raja of Patiala to know his mind in case there was a conflict between the British and him. The Raja's reply was elusive as he had already been wooed by the British. So was the attitude of other Sikh chieftains who inwardly wanted protection because they believed "Ranjit Singh's friendship was only one degree less dangerous than his enmity."[14]

The Maharaja was much perturbed at the changed demeanour of the British. He at once held communication with his counsellers. The Darbar was of two minds. Some counsellers were for resistance while others were for peace at any price. The leader of the group pleading for resisting the British was Mohkam Chand who considered it more honourable to die fighting than to capitulate without firing a shot. At his instance primarily, orders were sent to all the *sardars* to gather their forces to face the British on the Sutlej. The forts of Gobindgarh, Phillour and Lahore were strengthened and stocked with provisions of war material. Within a few days nearly 1,00,000 Punjabis answered the call to arms.

Faqir Aziz-ud-din was for appeasement and avoiding hostilities as far as possible. He was fully backed by Sada Kaur.

Ranjit Singh realized full well, if he lost now, all would be lost. If he could ward off danger for the moment, he would live to fight another day. He decided to swallow his pride and accept the Sutlej as has eastern boundary but if Ochterlony crossed the river he would fight the British to the finish.[15]

On January 1809, Ochterlony left Delhi for Karnal at the head of three infantry battalions, a regiment of cavalry and some artillery. His instructions were to compel the Darbar to give up its recent conquests; on the way to call upon Malwa chiefs for assistance. If any one showed sympathy with Ranjit Singh, he was to be told plainly what was in store for him. He was also instructed not to leave any opportunity of making contacts with disaffected elements in the Lahore Durbar. On 9th February, Ochterlony made an official proclamation on behalf of the government that the chiefs of Malwa were under British protection, the Darbar's forts including those of Khanoor

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and Khanpur were to be vacated and the Darbar was to withdraw all its forces to the western banks of the Sutlej.[16]

Ranjit Singh informed Metcalfe that he had ordered Darbar to evacuate Ambala. Metcalfe demanded evacuation of Faridkot and Sahnewal. At the same time, he warned the British Commander-in-Chief that war was inevitable; in that case, writes back the Commander-in-Chief that he should keep the Punjab in talking for some days as to give him time to plan his strategy.[17]

The negotiations were resumed at Amritsar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh agreed to all the conditions imposed by the British except giving up Faridkot. Metcalfe agreed to refer the question to Calcutta, chiefly because it gave him the excuse to postponing the signing of the treaty of friendship, for which the Lahore Darbar had become more insistent than ever.

The Maharaja had already given in all along, but surprising enough, the British were not willing to make even a gesture of compromise. The Maharaja expressed, "Even the Oyster returns a pearl when it receives a drop of rain but he wondered at the audacity of the British who were not at all responsive to even his minimum demand."

In fact, Metcalfe had decided that Ranjit Singh's kingdom across the Sutlej should also be subverted and his rule put to an end. He recommended full scale invasion of the Punjab and tried hard to find an excuse for doing so. When he did not find any excuse nor could he receive any instructions in this respect from higher authorities, he lost patience.

On 22th January, 1809 he advised the commander-in-chief that Raja has nominally taken the field. He also took the responsibility of recommending to His Excellency's attention the invasion of the Punjab as a measure urgently desirable with reference to the state in this country in the event of inevitable hostilities.[18]

Metcalfe's exhortation to wage war took both the commander-in-chief and resident Seaton by surprise. Nevertheless, British units were alerted and a force under Major St. Leger was asked to be prepared to join at short notice.

However, the necessity for invading the Punjab suddenly vanished. Napoleon attacked Spain and with his armies bogged down in Europe, it was unlikely that he would now advance towards India for some years to come. British policy underwent a corresponding change.

On 30th January, 1809, Ochterlony received fresh instruction. "The reduction or subversion of the power of chieftain (Ranjit Singh) which under other circumstances was considered highly desirable and expected to be a probable consequence, though not settled purpose of the approximation of our troops to the frontier of the Punjab is no longer of the same importance to our interest. Ranjit Singh could be left alone.

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His friendship was no longer necessary and his chagrin could perhaps be lessened if he was allowed to retain his 'old conquests' in Malwa and the military post was withdrawn further back from his frontier."[19]

For Ranjit Singh, the situation was critical. His reputation among his people plummeted. The enemy was massing his armies on the frontiers. The cold war that had gone on the preceding six months had produced a state of tension that a small incident could set light to powder magazine.

On 25th February, 1809, Shia Muslims in the Metcalfe's escort took out a procession in the streets of Amritsar and in the process they came to the opening in front of the Golden Temple, Amritsar. It also happened to be the day of Holi and a large number of Nihangs with their celebrated leader Akali Phula Singh had foregathered in the city for the celebration. The Nihangs remonstrated with the procession to take another route. Shias resisted and there was a scuttle between the parties. There were more casualties on the side of Nihangs than on that of the Shias. It was not known who was the aggressor but tension broke out. It was apprehended that Nihangs might react to take revenge. But the Maharaja intervened immediately and the situation was almost brought under control. He also sent envoy to Metcalfe to apologise for the lack of courtesy shown to the guests and promised compensation. Metcalfe's report blamed Phula Singh, but not the Maharaja for the event.

Fortunately, before the news could reach Calcutta, the Governor General had dispatched the two drafts of treaties to be offered with instruction to Ochterlony to act accordingly.

Both the drafts consisted of three articles and were almost identical. One of the drafts had a claim appended to the second article to the effect that Ranjit Singh renounced all claim to sovereignty over Sikh Chiefs to the south of the Sutlej and all rights of interference in their concerns.

On the 25th February, 1809, the Treaty was formally signed at Amritsar. The important terms of the Treaty were as under:

1) The Lahore Government was placed "on the footing of the most favoured powers". The British Government having no concern with "the territories and subjects of Raja to the northward of the river Sutlej."
2) Ranjit Singh returned the territory he had possessed on the left bank of the Sutlej before the coming of Metcalfe but was not "to maintain in the territory which he occupies on the left bank of the river Sutlej more troops than are necessary for internal duties of that territory" and he was not to encroach on others' possessions and rights."
3) In the event of the violation of any of the preceding articles or of departure from the rules of friendship the treaty shall be considered null and void.[20]

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The Treaty of Amritsar was a grievous blow to Ranjit Singh's dream of uniting all the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh both in the Cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej' area under his own banner. The British came closer to Lahore and could very easily monitor the activities of Lahore Durbar, even indulge in intriguing against Ranjit Singh rule. In the treaty it was not made clear whether Sutlej unto its merger in the river Indus formed the boundary of Lahore Durbar or the sea where Indus merges in the sea it created problems for the Maharaja in the Trans-Indus areas.

Dr. N. K. Sinha says, "Ranjit Singh suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to put his pride in his pocket."[21] Metcalfe also endorsed his view, although in different diction saying at the same time that Ranjit Singh is not famous for disputed enterprise.[22]

Such view is acceptable only in limited sense. Ranjit Singh did meet failure to achieve his aim through diplomacy, but could he succeed by abandoning this course? He was a realist in political game and prudent enough not to pick up quarrel with the British because he was aware that his soldiers were not equal to the British counterparts. The Sikh chiefs especially of the Cis-Sutlej were not dependable. To steer clear through such labyrinth was a Herculean task but Ranjit Singh accomplished it. In fact, it speaks volumes of his political sagacity, certainly not his short-sightedness or cowardice. Ranjit Singh knew his limitations.

The chiefs of Multan and Kasur, although humbled were simmering, the whole of North-Western frontier and many of the chiefs of Trans-Indus areas were looking askance at the rise of Ranjit Singh. In such a situation, Ranjit Singh's most important imperative was to save his kingdom which had not yet grown to youth-hood.

Ranjit Singh did not allow his ambition to cross the limit of political probity and went as far as it was within his capabilities. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Amritsar he turned his attention to other areas of the Punjab not within his Jurisdiction.

It was a master-stroke of his policy. According to Cunningham, he got carte blanche for realizing his ambition in the north and north western parts of the Punjab.[23] His southern borders having become secure, he had no more to keep a huge army for protection against the British and waste energy in that side. These he could now use elsewhere.

Although with the treaty of Amritsar, friendship between Ranjit Singh and the British was established, yet Ranjit Singh was suspicious about the real intentions of the British. His fear was that they had a unmitigated ambition to bring Punjab under their direct control. Shortly, after the most of distrust and suspicion melted away, both Ranjit Singh and the British came to recognize the value of peaceful relations.

In 1811, presents were exchanged between the British and Ranjit Singh. In 1812, Ochterlony attended the marriage of Ranjit Singh's son Kharak Singh. Checked in the east, Ranjit Singh had vast opportunities of expansion in the north and the west.

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In the north lay petty Rajput states in the foothills of the Himalayas. In the west practically the whole of west Punjab and even territories further ahead if necessary, offered tempting prizes for conquest. Only by means of his friendship, he could hope to ensure a safe rear without which it was not possible for him to employ the requisite successful number of forces to undertake expeditions to affect conquests. A hostile British power in the rear could at any time create enormous difficulties.

One by one, Ranjit Singh conquered Kangra, Nurpur, Chamba, Basholi, Jammu, Jhang, Sahiwal, Khuskali, Bhimber, Poonchh, Multan, Kashmir, Hazara and Mankera. Having achieved the line of Indus in the North West boundary, he crossed the river and subjected Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Tonk and Derajat under his influence. In the course of these campaigns, there was no hurdle put up by the British. In 1818, the Maharaja was called upon to deal with a tremendous Afghan challenge in the North West. Some of the Chieftains such as the rulers of Multan and Kashmir approached the British for help against Ranjit Singh, but the British chose to keep quiet. Even when after the death of Fateh Khan Barakzai, who was the Wazir of Kabul, Ranjit Singh aggressively planned to establish his hegemony in the area beyond river Sind, the British kept slience.

In fact, the British did not exploit the difficulties and troubles of Ranjit Singh and maintained as usual the attitude of neutrality and non-interference.

Such demeanour on the part of the British accrued a lot of benefits to the Maharaja. The British gains from friendship with the Maharaja were also considerable. Upto 1815, the British were awfully involved in their campaign against Pindares Marathas and Gorkhas. The Pindares in concert with Marathas presented formidable challenge. Side by side, the British had to face the Gorkhas from Nepal. Without meeting successfully these challenges, the British could not claim absolute supremacy in India. During all these years, Ranjit Singh made no attempt to fish in the troubled water. The British were happy to note that during the three years of strains and stresses, when some disaffected Maratha or Gorkha princes approached Ranjit Singh for help against the British, the Maharaja ignored their overtures.

In 1820, he refused to offer aid to the ex-ruler of Nagpur. In 1822, he declined to respond to appeal of ex-Peshwa Baji Rao II.[24]

In 1824, this way, in a war between the Burmese and the British, the latter could comfortably concentrate upon their plans to defeat the Burmese. In 1825, the British invested the fort of Bharatpur and the siege got prolonged a little too long. The Jat Raja of Bharatpur appealed to the Maharaja for succour offering Rs 1,00,000/- for every day's march and, Rs. 50,000/- for everyday, he remained with him if he would bring 20,000 men to his assistance.[25] Maharaja refused to respond; he had done all this because of his friendly relations with them and also because such relations were

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beneficial for his career as well as for his kingdom.

Close friendly relations between the two powers continued up to the middle of the twenties, when the whole of India, except Punjab and Sind, had come under the control of the British. The absence of any serious challenge to their political hegemony brought about a change in their internal and external policies. This change became manifest from 1828 onwards although the British never showed openly disrespect to the Treaty of Amritsar. A feeling grew in British bureaucracy that Ranjit Singh had built a vast empire unheeded by the British.[26]

Captain Murray, the British political agent first at Ludhiana and thereafter at Ambala, openly advocated that Ranjit Singh might not be permitted to strengthen his hold south of the Sutlej.

Under the Treaty of Amritsar, 1809, the Maharaja had given up territories occupied during his third campaign in Cis-Sutlej areas.

The British, however, did not object to the territories which he had acquired during his first two expeditions. The most important of these territories were 46 villages in Naraingarh, 66 villages in Jagraon, 62 villages in Bhurong, 40 villages in Bhondree Bullepoor, 60 villages in Eesroo, 42 villages in Dabewal, 22 villages in Mullowal, 12 villages in Mukhoo, 20 villages in Baduwal, 20 villages in Bassee, 30 villages in Peer Mohammad, 25 villages in Millaimpoor Sealba, Machhiwara, Chamkaur, Umrala, Khulall Majra, Kot Gura Hasa, Mullere, Rajooaan, Toogul, Anandpur, Makhowal, Wadni and Ferozepur.

The British policy in regard to all these places was to question the validity of the claim of the Maharaja. The Maharaja did not give up his claims easily and persistently held them until he was forced by circumstances to give up.

The most important territories where the claims of Ranjit Singh were challenged were Wadni, Ahluwalia possession, Sialba, Machhiwara and Kang, Fatehgarh, Talwandi and Ferozepur.

Wadni

Situated in the Cis-Sutlej region, Ranjit Singh occupied it and gave it to Sada Kaur as a grant against the payment of Rs. 15000/-. Mian Nauda was declared to be Sada Kaur's Zamindar in 1811. In 1817, he died and his son was dispossessed of the territory by the Rani who now occupied the territories. Sada Kaur was thrown out in 1821 by the Maharaja who now sent his forces to occupy the territory. Sada Kaur at that juncture appealed to the British for protection who accepting her as the chief of Kanhaiya in Cis-Sutlej areas under their protection, ejected Ranjit Singh's troops from the fort of Wadni. Ranjit Singh fumed and fretted but prudentially avoided a collision with the British troops.[27]

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The government of India considered the Rani's protection of the territory in 1807 as an establishment of her personal sovereignty and therefore its grant by Ranjit Singh in 1808 was invalid. And since, Wadni lay south of Sutlej and since, the Rani at least once had sought the British protection, Ranjit Singh's claim on the territory could not be accepted. Captain Wade, the British superintendent of the Sikh and all officers at Ludhiana, tried hard to support Ranjit Singh's claim, yet his arguments were not accepted. The event engendered bitterness between the two powers. The negotiations however, went on until a compromise was reached in 1826 and Maharaja's claim on Wadni was recognised. So were his claims on Anandpur, Makhowal and Chamkaur accepted.

The Ahluwalia Possessions

In 1825, Fateh Singh fled across the Sutlej areas with whole of his family and took refuge at Jagraon. He approached Wade at Ludhiana and Murray at Ambala for protection.

Ranjit Singh claimed the protection of all the 454 villages belonging to Ahluwalia chief, the districts of Jagraon and Naraingarh which had been granted by the Maharaja himself in return for a *nazrana* from the Ahluwalia chief. His claims were supported by Wade who in his letter dated 10th January argued that (i) when asked by captain Birch to send a *vakil* to represent him, Fateh Singh had refused it on the basis that he had already represented through the Maharaja's *vakil.* (ii) When in 1812, Fateh Singh sent his agent to Ludhiana, he was introduced to the British agent by the Maharaja's *vakil,* through whom he conducted all his affairs. In March 1827, Fateh Singh returned to his possessions in the Cis-Sutlej areas and there was establishment of friendly relations between him and the Maharaja on the basis of an agreement that clearly showed that Fateh Singh was hardly better than a dependent of the latter.

These arguments were not accepted by Governor General and he decided that districts of Jagraon and Naraingarh were declared to be under Maharaja's protection. But to the rest of the Ahluwalia's possession in the Cis-Sutlej areas, the British protection was extended.

Ferozepur

Among all the territorial disputes, the most important was that of Ferozepur. Ferozepur was under Ranjit Singh's protection.

One Gurbakash Singh, on the possession of his territory in Trans-Sutlej region acquired Ferozepur in 1771. In 1772, the Sardar divided his possessions among his four sons. Dhanna Singh received the territory of Ferozepur. Soon after Nizam of Kasur invaded the territory and occupied half of seven villages comprising the domain

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of Ferozepur. Ranjit Singh subdued Kasur in 1807 and consigned the territory of Ferozepur to Nihal Singh Attari. Dhanna Singh acted as his *zamindar*. After Dhanna Singh's death in 1815, his widow (Lachhman Kaur) put up her claim over Ferozepur and proceeded to seek help from the British to consummate her objective. The British paid no heed to her solicitations. In 1824, she offered to hand over Ferozepur to the British in return for an equivalent territory near her father's state of Buria. The Governor General-in-Council refused to entertain her appeal and contrarily held that such would doubtless excite alarm and suspicion in the mind of Ranjit Singh.[28]

In 1835, Lachhman Kaur died and the Ludhiana agent decided that her state might be considered lapsed to the English and not to Ranjit Singh who had uptil then been acknowledged as her overlord. The British troops moved in and began to fortify Ferozepur. In 1838, Ferozepur was made a military cantonment.

For quite sometime, the British had been eyeing Ferozepur as a very important strategic place.[29] Murray wrote in December 1823, that Ludhiana fort being distant from Lahore, it could not be as useful as a post of check or observation as Ferozpur."

Ferozepur was only forty miles from Lahore and close to many fords from which troops could wade across the Sutlej. This being so, Ludhiana could not be an effective base for operations. Moreover, it being situated close to the boundary line of Bahawalpur could help the English to monitor the goings-on in Bahawalpur State. Even movements in Sind could be watched without much dificulty.

Dr. R.R. Sethi in his dissertation 'Lahore Durbar' writes that with the loss of Ferozepur it appeared as if a pistol had been put at the chest of Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh, however swallowed this loss in a spirit of helplessness.[30] Ranjit Singh had to do it. He, too counterpoise by the British, fortified Kasur stationing a large number of troops. Kasur was a few miles away from Ferozepur, just across the river Sutlej.

Fatehgarh

Fatehgarh was a mud fortress, only 25 paces square with a few attached huts. It was a part of Anandpur Sahib and originally it was under Singhpuria *sardars*. As the circumstances rolled on, it came under the political control of Ranjit Singh and for nearly twenty years till 1829, it had been under a separate *thanedar* appointed by the Lahore Government and had been a habitat of large numbers of Sodhis.

In 1829, Murray, informed Fraser, the British resident at Delhi that the fortress had been forcibly occupied by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and hence, Maharaja's garrison be ejected from the fort.

The Maharaja's case was pleaded by Wade who pointed out that the Government of India had already placed Anandpur Sahib vide its letter of 14th November, 1828, under the supremacy of the Maharaja and the fortress was a part of that. The

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Government of India got conducted a topographical survey of the territory and the sketch which was drawn showed Fatehgarh as part of the city of Anandpur.[31] Thereafter, the Government of India recognized the sovereignty of the Maharaja over Fatehgarh.

Talwandi was another territory in Cis-Sutlej region that caused dispute between Ranjit Singh and the British. The bone of contention was whether Ranjit Singh had the right to bring the territory under his protection. After a protracted exchange of arguments, the British General accepted the claim of the Maharaja to the territory under his protectorate.

From the aforesaid narration, it is clear, that there arose moments of conflict, but they did not affect the friendly relations very adversely between Ranjit Singh and the British. But in the thirties and onwards, certain development took place which caused tension and uneasiness between the two powers.

After a lot of dithering and exchange of views in quick succession, a tripartite treaty between the English, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shujah was concluded on June 26, 1838. It confirmed to the Sikh kingdom in perpetuity the former Afghan possessions of Kashmir, Attock and Hazare; the territories lying on either bank of the Indus; Peshawar and the Yusafzai; Dependencies upto Khyber, Bannu, Kalabagh and other dependent Wazir districts the Derajat and the rich province of Multan. For relinquishing its claim on Shikarpur, the Lahore government, under British mediation, was to receive a sum of 15 lacs rupees. It was also agreed that both the British and Sikh governments would jointly control the foreign relation of Afghanistan.

The Maharaja did accept the terms but he was not satisfied. His demand to get Shikarpur was not conceded either by the British or by the Amirs. Nor he was permitted to occupy Jalalabad. The Treaty did not stipulate that the British army would station within the territory of Ranjit Singh. But as operation came into effect, the British troops gathered alongside Indus for an emergency, causing a lot of headache to Ranjit Singh. He, however, became cautious and refused the demand of the British to convey their forces through his territory except a few officials and high-ranking civil and military personages. The main army called Army of Indus comprising British soldiers and Shah Shujah's supporters, marched to Qandahar via Shikarpur.[32]

The Maharaja sent his forces to participate in the expedition. Dr. B.D. Hasrat informs, "The Maharaja had ordered Kanwar Kharak Singh, Raja Dhyan Singh and Jamadhar Khushal Singh to join Wade at Peshawar. Tej Singh marched with his troops and a train of artillery northward and Raja Gulab Singh was ordered to join his forces with that of Shahzada, the son of Shahshuja."

The Army of Indus did acquire a few victories to begin with, installed Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul, but ultimately it was forced to wind up and beat a comeback. Lahore Durbar allowed the retreating army passage through his kingdom.

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As long as the Maharaja lived, he actively participated in the military operation. Even after his death, Lahore Durbar was not passive or indifferent to help the British in their hour of disappointment.

Amidst all his overtures to help the British, Maharaja was never bereft of anxiety. Being a person of probity, he was always skeptical of the British designs. But, he was constrained by the circumstances to follow the line of the British. He was aware that Dost Muhammad was his bitterest enemy and Afghans even of his territory had not reconciled to his occupation of the Trans-Indus region. Dost Muhammad Khan had offered his willingness to make a common cause with the British against Russia and then to elicit their help to launch attack on the territory of Lahore Durbar. In that case, Ranjit Singh's difficulties were sure to skyrocket; even he could have lost Peshawar, may be the whole Tran-Indus' area up to Khybar pass. He would have to face two enemies, the British and Dost Mohammad Khan.

Another factor which restrained him from quarrelling with the British was personal. His health was deteriorating very fast and according to medical report there was little hope for his survival for a long time. Naturally, his mental focus was in the future of his kingdom which he had built-up assiduously.

From the narrative of historical circumstances shaping the British-Sikh relations, the conclusions which we drew do not concur with the views of writers on Ranjit Singh such as N.K. Sinha, Sita Ram Kohli, C.H. Payne, M.C Gregor etc, etc.

Commenting upon Ranjit Singh's relations with the British, Dr. N.K. Sinha writes, "In his relations with the British Government in the last decade of his career, Ranjit Singh is pathetic figure, helpless and inert." The Maharaja knew that the British were more powerful than he and therefore always shy of getting into direct military confrontation with them.[33] Principal Sita Ram Kohli expresses " that the Maharaja could not take a firm stand against the British because he was very much afraid of their superior strength."[34] G.L. Chopra says, "It may be remarked that the policy of conciliation which Ranjit Singh maintained towards the English throughout his career was inspired by the dread of that power. It was not the result of any genuine feeling of trust and goodwill as it has been suggested by several writers."[35]

Lepel Griffin remarked, "The Maharaja honourably observed his engagements and recognizing that the power of the English was invincible."[36] C.H. Payne recorded, "Until his death, Ranjit Singh never lost sight of the fact that the welfare, nay, the very existence of his kingdom depended on the maintenance of friendly relations with the British."[37]

These views seem to have been formed rather hastily. It is indeed too much to say that the Maharaja acted pusillanimously or unwisely in his dealings with the British. The views that Maharaja was lacking in courage and was a victim of Anglophobia is

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unwarranted. He, no doubt, regarded the British as a superior power, but, that does not necessarily mean that he was mortally afraid of them or looked pathetic. Similarly, the fact that his resources did not match those of British does not essentially prove that he did not have the capacity to meet the British in the battlefield. Nor can it be said that the Maharaja took too bloated a view of his friendship with the British and allowed his attachment to it to overweigh all other circumstances. At one stage in his career, he was all praise for his friendship with the British because it served his material interest. But towards the end of his period, he began to blink on it and start looking elsewhere for friends. Captain Wade noticed a change in the tone and temper of Lahore ruler when he met him in November, 1837, which shows that he was feeling uneasy about the British role in Sind and Afghanistan.[38] In this perspective Ranjit Singh adopted friendly attitude towards Nepal which was then not well disposed to the British. A Nepalese mission arrived at his court and was received cordially by the Maharaja.

The fact is that Ranjit Singh had to work under stressful circumstances. From 1827 onwards, he was always face to face with difficulties. With the rise of Dost Mohammad and his declaration of perpetual *jehad* against the Sikhs, the Maharaja's problems in the Trans-Indus territories became very serious and complicated. Although, he frustrated all the attempts of Dost Mohammad Khan to capture Peshawar by force, yet there was no guarantee that he would not exploit the situation if the Maharaja got involved somewhere else.

The Maharaja was fully aware of the fact that Dost Mohammad was ever all out to win the goodwill of the British against the Sikhs and in case he did not deal with the British wisely and diplomatically, they could drift towards Dost Mohammad, who was ready to fall in love with them in opposing the Russo-Persian advance towards India, only if they helped him.

In fact, the Maharaja had to deal with the British under extremely hard circumstances. Even then, he tried his utmost to make good a bad bargain but that could only be within certain limits.

Except in the early period of his rule, he remained on tenterhooks while dealing with the British. He had full knowledge of the British statecraft and their ulterior motives of impeding the further progress of Sikh kingdom in terms of economic prosperity and political prestige. The Maharaja could not wriggle out of the hard circumstances without allies. He did move in this direction. He tried to develop friendly relations with Nepal. He also tried to find some allies among princes who had been sulking, but none was responsive. In the meanwhile, he passed away.

– (Principal) Surjit Singh Gandhi

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Foot Notes & References

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3. The deputation to Delhi consisted of Raja Bhag Singh of Jind, Raja Lal Singh of Kaithal, the Diwan of Patiala and the Chiefs of Jagadhari and Radaur.
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29. Punjab Government Records 71/231 Murray to Elliott
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31. *Advanced History of the Punjab,* p. 105.
32. Auckland to Hobbouse 17 June, 1838 (Private) Binghton (BM)36473, 264 a
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6

RANJIT SINGH AND STATECRAFT

Statecraft is the art of governance of a state or kingdom. The object of this presentation is to understand Ranjit Singh's mode of governance and to assess how far he succeeded in this task, and wherein lay his failure in building up a strong and stable kingdom, to maintain its integrity and independence as a sovereign entity. In other words, the aim of the present study is to draw a balance sheet, by identifying the striking features of his governance – both on the positive and the negative side. This assessment of Ranjit Singh's regime has been based largely upon the foreign source material produced and published from the British and French side. As a prelude, a brief survey of the historiography of the period has been provided suggesting thereby some significant pointers for studying Ranjit Singh's statecraft.

There had been a wealth of source material on Ranjit Singh and his administration from the British and foreign accounts which chronicle the political and military administration of his regime, but, is partial and one-sided. Regrettably, scholars have neglected the use of Persian sources on Ranjit Singh, brought out by non-professional historians who are ignorant of the Persian language. Though, some valuable articles and studies have appeared, there remains a need for further research publications on Ranjit Singh and his times, particularly in the light of large, hitherto, unpublished source material and new techniques of historical analysis. Each age has its own historian. Ranjit Singh still awaits a historian!

Ranjit Singh's anxieties are to be seen in the context of the prevailing situation in the country. His own life was an incessant career of war. It was a mediocre age, too commonplace and too incurious to supply the necessary stimulus to any creative life. The political issues were of primary importance, which only the sword could settle. By 1805, Ranjit Singh was in possession of Lahore and Amritsar, and was realising

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the tributes from Jammu and Kashmir.

Even hints given obliquely by contemporary eyewitnesses open a new line of enquiry into historical investigations. Major H.M. Lawrence published his book in 1841, entitled *Adventures of an officer in the service of Ranjeet Singh,* which is not a memoir or a historical account but a novel.[1] This work captures the spirit of Ranjit Singh's times by a critique of Ranjit Singh's military system; observations made in the guise of fiction are perceptive. While narrating some of the features of Ranjit Singh's personality, Lawrence states that in the course of his conversations with Ranjit Singh, the latter told him that, in the governance of his kingdom, the 'maxims of Timur had guided him'.[2] By maxims, Lawrence meant Timur's Institutes which had recommended social justice, obedience to God and compassion as the guiding principles of administration.[3]

Timur or Tamerlane was the ruler of Turkistan, Persia and the whole of Central Asia. He attacked India in 1398-1399. A close study of his military exploits and adventures shows that in military expeditions, tactics, the organisation of his cavalry and in rough and ready justice, Ranjit Singh took Timur as his model. In fact, the shades of Timur hover over Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh protected the weak, rewarded the deserving and curbed the depredations of the rebel, which is in line with Timur's attitude.

Ranjit Sigh too followed Timur's practice of maintaining a record of his life story by extolling his achievements. In this connection, Ranjit Singh entrusted the task of writing about his rule to Sohan Lal Suri and Dewan Amar Nath, the former produced the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, and the latter *Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh*. Timur's autobiographical account was written at his behest by Sharif-ud-din for posterity to perpetuate his name. Dewan Amar Nath even adopted Sharifuddin's title of *Zafarnama* for writing on Ranjit Singh and his kingdom. Edward Gibbon's account of Timur's life is based on Sharifuddin's work. Like Timur, Ranjit Singh was fond of horses. He too respected the holy men, and had a superstitious reverence for omens and astrologers. Gibbon's account of Timur provides sound evidence to suggest that Timur and Ranjit Singh shared much in common in the governance of country, despite their living centuries apart.[4]

It is indeed regrettable that Ranjit Singh's chiefs left no private records for posterity. Sohan Lal Suri, the *Akhbar Navis* of Ranjit Singh's court, produced his *Umdat-ut-Twarikh* in Persian, which was published in 1885. [5] Sohan Lal was commissioned by Ranjit Singh to undertake this task. Sohan Lal's work is transparently honest and chronologically sound, containing massive information on the contemporary events, but is not explanatory or critical. It is laudatory and gives details about rewards, donations and minor skirmishes. Ranjit Singh showed it to Col. C.M. Wade, the British

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agent at the Maharaja's court, who appreciated the immense labour of the author, and his meticulous care for accuracy of the facts presented. Only two volumes of this work were translated, and published in English, though its first volume has appeared in Punjabi. Regrettably, the English translation of the remaining massive manuscript has been lying dormant in the archives of Guru Nanak Dev University for long.[6] The portion relating to the period from 29th Sept. 1845 to 20th February, 1846, on the crucial period of the first Anglo-Sikh War is missing from the original Persian text. The original text of the portion had been given to Sir Herbert Edwards, A.D.C. to Sir Hough Gough at Mudki and Sobraon in 1845-60 and was probably never recovered.

Dewan Amar Nath's *Zafarnama* in Persian published by Sita Ram Kohli in 1928, is a document of first-class historical value. Amar Nath son of Dewan Dina Nath, Ranjit Singh's Finance Minister and a paymaster of the cavalry forces, was ordered by Ranjit Singh to record the events of his times.[7] Sita Ram Kohli regards Amar Nath's account as the 'most original source of information concerning the reign of Ranjit Singh'.[8] The work written in a poetic vein closes with 1836-37, about three years before Ranjit Singh's death. The English translation of its text ending with 1820 published in the 'Calcutta Review' of 1858 is unsatisfactory.[9] There are, of course, some other Persian sources available on the pre-1825 period. The Afghan sources, except, of course, the autobiography of Shah Shuja, are scarce. But Indian scholars have made an extensive use of the accounts furnished by the English, French and German travellers to the Maharaja's court. These accounts partly anecdotal, flitting from one topic to another, though partial, contain some credible observations on men and affairs. But, Victor Jacquement's account of Ranjit Singh and his mode of governance is easily the most perceptive and judicious that could be found in the contemporary travel records of Ranjit Singh and his times.[10] Born in 1801, Jacquement was an eminent naturalist to the Royal Museum of Natural History of Paris. He was commissioned by the French government to travel to India for collecting botanical and geological information. He kept a journal and wrote numerous letters home, which were published in India in 1834 and 1835. He died in Bombay in 1832. General Court's Memoirs (1818-48) discovered in 1986 still remain unpublished.

There is still much scope for the utilization of the Persian sources in the reconstruction of the life and times of Ranjit Singh. Narendera Kumar Sinha's authoritative biography of Ranjit Singh is still wanting in this respect.[11] How is it that N.K. Sinha who had no local knowledge of Punjab and its language took up the study of Ranjit Singh's period? It was due to Sir Jadunath Sarkar who was deeply interested in unravelling the complicated political developments in Northern India in the early 18th and 19th century. Sir Jadunath Sarkar guided researchers like N.K. Sinha, to take up Ranjit Singh, K.R. Quanungo to write the history of the Jats, and Hari Ram Gupta

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to concentrate on the Sikh period of Punjab history. This deep and abiding interest in Punjab history was kindled in Bengal due to the spirit of national resurgence particularly after Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore had written a stirring poem on the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur entitled 'Vandee Vir' (1899), which sank and settled in the hearts of many Bengalis. Aurobindo Ghosh lauded in his writings the heroic sacrifices and glorious achievements of Guru Gobind Singh. Ranjit Singh represented to Bengal a symbol of liberation from the fetters of foreign rule and freedom of spirit. Thus, began a nationalist discourse on the writing of Punjab history!

Sir Lepel Griffin's lucid and vivid portrayal of Ranjit Singh's personality is typically a British official's appreciation holding Ranjit Singh responsible for the destruction of his Kingdom.[12] Syed Muhammed Latif's *History of the Punjab* drawing from Amar Nath's account of Ranjit Singh, H.T. Princep and Captain Murray, a bare chronological narrative presents Ranjit Singh as a fanatical unscrupulous and ruthless ruler.[13] Following Sir Lepel Griffin's model, Khushwant Singh's literary biography based primarily on British sources tends to assume a conventional form.[14] It seems that Sita Ram Kohli's dispersed observations in several of his studies on Ranjit Singh's administration are insightful and give much impulse to thought and research.[15] Sita Ram Kohli's biography of Ranjit Singh in Urdu is a first-class lucid and straightforward account of Ranjit Singh's life and administration for the general reader.[16]

As a scholar, Sita Ram Kohli, who ably compiled the two volumes of the *Khalsa Darbar Records* in four years stands as a class by himself because of his plentitude of erudition, wide sweep, and a marvellous command of the Persian sources. As a pioneer, he had set up a tradition of historical scholarship on Punjab history, which was ably sustained, nourished, and enriched by that doyen of Punjab historians, Dr Ganda Singh, Hari Ram Gupta, Dr Fauja Singh and others. It is appropriate at this stage to carry the historical thinking to a higher power and interpenetration, the study of the historiography of Ranjit Singh's period by presiding over the works of multiple specialists, and coordinate one another to know where we stand in scholarship on Ranjit Singh. The latest work of Ranjit Singh by Jean Marie Lefont is an elegantly produced pictorial representation of the Maharaja and his court in splendour.

Ranjit Singh was one of the most remarkable men of his times. Endowed with a sharp intellect, he was made of iron and flint. A man of tearing personality, he was bold, fearless, passionately curious, and a realist in diplomacy. In a period of extraordinary political instability in the country ridden by widespread disorder, Ranjit Singh, by the force of his personality, created a kingdom and continued to control it so long as he lived despite his declining health in the last years of his reign.

Ranjit Singh never proclaimed himself a Maharaja, he never sat on a throne and

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he never struck a coin in his own name. Since, he assumed power he was content with his name, though Baba Sahib Singh Bedi had proclaimed him a Maharaja when he was twenty. His coins never bore his effigy. Poets tend to squeeze a poetical phrase to express cryptically the reality of a situation. The poet Sir Muhammad Iqbal felt unhappy at the rise of the *Khalsa* and liquidation of the Muslim rule in Punjab:

The quicksilver from the heart is gone
Do you know what befell Punjab
The Khalsa surrendered the sword
But Islam is extinguished![17]

The eighteenth century India was an 'age of troubles' generally called *'gardi ka waqt'* (bad times). It was probably the worst of times in the history of India, a period of greater misery and adversity than anything that Europe had witnessed, since, the Dark Ages, not excluding the Thirty-year war. India was slipping into chaos. The Mughal rule had tumbled; in Delhi there was a mock ruler, virtually a prisoner, holding a vain title, a mere puppet bemoaning his fate. In Northern India, atrocities committed by Nadir Shah in 1738-39, and later by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1748, 1750 and 1752, had brought untold suffering to people who had no moment of peace. In 1761, on the historic battlefield of Panipat, the death toll is estimated at nearly 200,000.

By the end of the eighteenth century, even the semblance of political unity in India did not exist, and everywhere local heads of old tribal communities or ambitious upstarts, were scrambling for power and territory. The great mass of people had everything to lose as the framework of law and order had broken down. The whole area was a prey to the strongest, and most audacious free booter of the day. In fact, there was no government that could govern and any adventurer who could muster a troop of horses might aspire to a throne and settle his account with his adversaries. Lord Hastings, the Governor General wrote in his journal that there has never been a really national feeling in the country[18].

The historical process works inexorably in human affairs in which an element of contingency operates. The rise of Sikh power in Punjab in the eighteenth century was a unique phenomenon. The forces of religious fervour unleashed by Guru Gobind Singh, the awakener of consciousness, his trials and tribulations and untold sufferings inspired his followers who were to transform with a passionate zeal a purely religious sect into a strong military confederacy in the early part of the eighteenth century. In the turbulent period, Ranjit Singh succeeded in galvanising these forces of theocratic confederacy into establishing a Sikh kingdom that was to last for half a century until its collapse at Sabraon.

Ranjit Singh's anxieties in the early 19th century were twofold; firstly, he was determined to stem the tide of the Afghan marauders rolling down the plains of the

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Punjab. But fortunately for him the Afghan empire was being destroyed by the internecine struggle waged by clans and splintered into principalities. Between 1800-1809, the Afghans witnessed a scene of civil war and half a dozen revolutions.

Secondly, Ranjit Singh witnessed the British establishing their undisputed ascendancy within India. Six of the chief principalities were bound by Lord Wellesley's Subsidiary system including those of the Nizam, Nawab Vazir of Oudh, the Peshwa at Poona and the Raja of Mysore. After the Maratha confederacy was shattered by Lord Lake, Delhi, the traditional capital, fell into the British hands under the Treaty of Surji Arjungaon. The British regarded the acquisition beyond the Jamuna as 'encumbrances, and were divided to swallow them'.[19] So they decided to limit the British territory to the west of the Jamuna, and allowed the country beyond the Jamuna to be parcelled out by the chiefs themselves. Thus, there was a 'belt of Jagirdars round ultra possessions from Karnal to Agra'.[20] The British confirmed the sovereign powers of the Sikh chiefs, Rajas of Jind, Kaithal, Thanesar and Shamgarh, and Nawab of Kunjpura. They were allowed to retain their territorial possessions, which they had held from the Marathas without being liable to the payment of tribute.[21]

The British hopes of peaceful conditions prevailing in the Cis-Sutlej states did not materialise due to Ranjit Singh's ambitious policy of subjugating them to his domain. The Sikh chiefs in their territories felt threatened by Ranjit Singh's growing power beyond the Sutlej. Ranjit Singh took Ludhiana in 1806, marched to Thanesar and reached upto twenty miles near Karnal. He was casting his covetous eyes on Patiala too.

The crucial factor that determined Ranjit Singh's statecraft was the British occupation of Delhi, and their strategic alliance with the chiefs of cis-Sutlej states. Added to this was the growing Franco-Russian expansion towards Persia and Afghanistan and posing a threat to India. Napoleon was interested in expanding his influence in the East. The Persians suffered defeats at the hands of the Russians. The Shah of Persia approached Napoleon for help. In May 1807, the Treaty of Frankenstein was signed between France and Persia. A French military mission was despatched to Persia. These developments established the French credibility and influence in the Near and Middle East. The British foreign office took a serious note of this situation and initiated a diplomatic offensive. To ward off any possibility of an invasion from the North-West and cementing diplomatic and military ties, Lord Minto, the Governor-General, sent John Malcolm to Persia and Mountstuart Elphinstone to Kabul. Elphinstone reached Peshawar in 1808. Minto thought it prudent to make the Punjab a buffer state against foreign invasion from Central Asia.

After Tilset, the chances of France expanding towards the East receded and Russia began to emerge as the main foreign bugbear. This led to the signing of the

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Treaty of Dardanelles between England and Turkey in early 1808 and Anglo-Persian alliance. Thus, it is against the background of the Eastern and Middle Eastern diplomacy that Ranjit Singh had to function within the limits of a framework.

Being restless and impatient, Ranjit Singh was determined to embark on his campaign of territorial aggrandisement. The Sikh chiefs of the cis-Satluj states became panicky and felt overawed. They feared that their territories would be swallowed by Ranjit Singh. That is why, the Sikh chiefs of Jind, Patiala and Kaithal approached the British in Delhi, for assistance to protect themselves from Ranjit Singh's invasion.[22]

Charles Metcalfe was only 23 when Lord Minto appointed him envoy on 20th June, 1809 to go to Lahore and negotiate a settlement with Ranjit Singh. Minto regarded him as the 'ugliest and most agreeable clever man in Europe'. By the time, Metcalfe arrived in Amritsar with a military escort for negotiating a Treaty on 19th September, 1808, there was a striking change in European politics. The French danger of invasion over India had receded. The British object was, therefore, limited only to the security of the country south of the river Satluj in order to give protection to the southern Sikhs, who were the rulers of small principalities. Ranjit Singh was thus required to withdraw his troops to the right bank of the Sutlej. On 8th February, 1809, Colonel David Ochterlony declared all states on the left of the river Sutlej under British protection. Ranjit Singh did not want his freedom of action to be curtailed. He required from the British envoy the acknowledgement of his sovereignty over all Sikh states and people lying between the Satluj and the Jamuna so that he could consolidate them into a great empire. The British were determined not to allow the subjection of the Cis-Satluj States – these principalities were already under British protection.

Metcalfe had his first meeting with Ranjit Singh on 13th September, 1809 at Kasur (now in Pakistan). Ranjit Singh did not come out to receive him.[23] Metcalfe has given a vivid account of his several meetings with Ranjit Singh which are recorded in John Malcolm Kay's *Life of Metcalfe*. Metcalfe's first meeting was just a formal courtesy call. As a shrewd man, Ranjit Singh had lurking suspicions about the British intentions in sending an envoy to Lahore Darbar. Metcalfe again met Ranjit Singh on 14th September while Ranjit Singh sat on a chair showing his lack of usual cordiality – at such critical moments he was capable of freezing his emotions. For a few days Ranjit Singh wanted to avoid meeting Metcalfe, but the envoy forced himself on him the next day.[24] At this meeting, Ranjit Singh was taciturn, and anxious to avoid any discussion on a serious political matter which weighed on Metcalfe's mind, for which he had come to meet Ranjit Singh.

Surprisingly, on 25th September, Ranjit Singh prepared to cross the Satluj to capture Faridkot. Before Ranjit Singh could leave, Metcalfe suggested to him to accept a proposal for a defensive alliance with the British. Metcalfe's argument ran as follows

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– 'If the French attack (his territory) you will profit greatly by the alliance, but in case they do not, you will not suffer by it.' But the condition was that in no case Ranjit Singh would be allowed to cross the Satluj and use his army there.[25] At this proposal Ranjit Singh made no comment. On the other hand, he followed his adventurous policy by seizing Faridkot, Ambala and reaching near Karnal.

On 10th December, Metcalfe sent Ranjit Singh a severely-worded warning that the British insisted on taking under their protection the Cis-Sutlej States – Nabha, Shahbad, Faridkot and Patiala. It was further made clear that the British Government could not acknowledge his rights between the Satluj and the Jamuna as the boundary line.[26] This warning staggered the Maharaja and he went to Lahore followed by the pertinacious enemy. Following up the warning, Metcalfe wanted to meet the Maharaja personally and deliver the ultimatum but again Ranjit Singh gave him a slip. However, Metcalf managed to meet Ranjit Singh on 17th December in the midst of a 'riotous cover of indulgence'.[27] On 22nd December, he gave a note to Ranjit Singh warning that in case the cis-Satluj chiefs were to be subjected by him then he must vacate the places he had occupied.[28]

All along Ranjit Singh was dilly-dallying and thoroughly exhausting Metcalfe's patience. As an astute diplomat, Ranjit Singh was using his tactical skills – flattery, hospitality, ruse and evasions to hoodwink Metcalfe and even waiting for the intervention of fortune, another name for Providence on which Machiavelli had relied for the solution of complex political problems. But a tough and a hard negotiator like Metcalfe could not allow himself to be duped by Ranjit Singh.

Metcalfe's 22nd December warning had staggered Ranjit Singh and after hearing it, he left the room, mounted his horse and what appeared to Metcalfe surprising levity began 'prancing' about the courtyard of his residence which the *London Times* called 'annodyne under vexed circumstances'.[29] Ranjit Singh's dilatory tactics had exhausted Metcalfe's patience. Metcalfe realised that the time for action had come. He got in touch with the commander-in-chief, Lt. General Hewitt in Saharanpur, and asked for a detachment to advance to the Satluj.[30] On 9th February 1809, Sir David Ochterlony made his Proclamation, warning Ranjit Singh that all the places he had occupied beyond the Satluj were to be restored to the original rulers, and that in no case his troops could be allowed to stay between the Satluj and the Jamuna except of course a small force at Phillour[31]. He had made up the troops to back the British demands. A strong body of troops under St. Leger was ready to move up for further military support.

By February 1809, the French danger in India was over. The Spanish insurrection had broken out. Sir Arthur Welleslay had vanquished the French at Ralico and Vimiero. In these circumstances, the British could now negotiate a settlement with Ranjit Singh

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from a stronger position. At the end of February 1809, sepoys in Metcalfe's service celebrated the festival of Muharram in honour of the death of Hussain and took out *Tazias* (elegant structures of tinsel work attended to by the replicas of the tomb of the martyrs), the display of which gave offence to the priests of the temple. On February 25, a party of the Sikhs who were described by Metcalfe as half soldiers, half devotees, marched out of the town with drum beating and colours flying followed by a surging rabble with the object of attacking the British mission with a fire of musketry[32]. But Ranjit Singh, who was then at Govindgarh, observing the tumult, came out shaking his *kamarband* as a signal for peace, proceeded to Metcalfe's tent. First of all Ranjit Singh intervened and sent his own men for the protection of the British. The bravery of the little band, which repulsed numerous adversaries, made a deep impression on Ranjit Singh and convinced him that he had to deal with a party superior to himself in every respect, especially in the excellence and discipline of its troops and was all the more determined to adopt the arms and discipline of the British.[33]

In view of British troops moving up to Ludhiana, Ranjit Singh realised the danger of war. At one stage, Metcalfe tells us that Ranjit Singh thought of going to war with the British. For this, Dewan Mohkam Chand's artillery was kept ready at Phillour *ghat* on the Sutlej for some time. Eventually, Ranjit Singh gave up the idea of fighting the British because he knew that he did not possess enough military strength to do so. Therefore, he signed the Amritsar Treaty on 25th April, 1809. According to this Treaty, Ranjit Singh would not maintain more troops than were necessary for the internal duties of his territories on the left bank (i.e., south) of the river Sutlej, 'nor commit or suffer any encroachments on the possessions or rights of the chiefs in its vicinity', and that if these articles were violated, or if there was a departure from the rules of friendship, the Treaty would be considered null and void.

For signing the Amritsar Treaty in 1809, a subject of protracted negotiations, Ranjit Singh has been strongly criticised on the ground that he had tamely succumbed to the British pressure and forfeited his liberty of action – he had become an agent, a surrogate, a puppet turned this way or that to pander to the whims and caprices of the British government and thereby paved the way for the eventual British annexation of the Punjab in 1849. Sangat Singh writes that the Treaty of 1809 'reflected Ranjit Singh's intellectual bankruptcy and that of his admirers and that he was presiding over the liquidation of his empire'.[34] Narendra Kumar Sinha maintains that by signing the Treaty, Ranjit Singh 'suffered a diplomatic defeat and had to put his pride in the pocket and eat humble pie',[35] Sinha adds that Ranjit Singh's failure to absorb the cis-Satluj states was a tragedy of militant nationalism and that Ranjit Singh's role was that of 'an unsuccessful Bismarck and Lincolin in one'.[36]

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Sinha's assumption is that if Ranjit Singh had absorbed the cis-Satluj states, he would have strengthened his diplomatic and military position as to confront the British authority, and put a greater pressure on them to negotiate a settlement on equal terms. But the stark reality is that the cis-Satluj chiefs, divided among themselves, were jealously guarding their own autonomy and were hostile to their own integration within Ranjit Singh's kingdom. In no case were they willing to co-operate with Ranjit Singh in building of a united Punjab.

The criticism against Ranjit Singh's succumbing to the British for signing the Treaty is completely unjustified. Foreign policy rests on long-term calculations and power interests. The alternative for him was an open armed conflict with the British, which he was not willing to wage. Being a realist in politics, Ranjit Singh knew the limits of his own power. He could seldom mistake a shadow for the substance. As a well-informed person, he knew that he could not find any ally in the country to support his resistance to the British. He understood that, on his own, he could not fight the British, though he was capable of doing so against any other Indian ruler in the country. Thus, he thought that the best course for him was to save as much as he could, and that prudence lay in curbing his own ambition of expanding his territory beyond the Satluj.

Ranjit Singh knew that Hyder Ali, Tipu Sultan, Mahadaji Sindhia fell one after another before the British artillery fire. When the Raja of Bharatpur approached him in 1826 for military aid against the British with an attractive offer of rupees one *lakh*, Ranjit Singh declined and made a significant comment underlying his policy. He said, "I might drive the British or the *ungrez-e-bahadur* as he styled them as far as Allyghur (Aligarh) but I could be driven back across the Sutlej and out of my kingdom."[37]

After the Treaty of 1809, Ranjit Singh succeeded in incorporating in his Kingdom large chunks of territory, such as Kangra (1809), Attock (1813), Multan (1819), Rajouri (1819), Kasur (1819), Peshawar (1834) and reaching up to Ladakh. His designs on Sind for establishing his commercial links with the outside world were thwarted by the British, and even his expedition to Shikarpur for which he had made preparations was resisted by the British. The British even refused to accept his right over Ferozepur, where they had set up their cantonment. As a sequel to the Treaty of 1809, Ranjit Singh signed the Tripartite Treaty on June 6, 1838 to which he became an unwilling party. This Treaty sabotaged his plan of extending his influence in Sind but acknowledged his *de jure* possession of Peshawar while committing him to support Shah Shujah's claim to the sovereignty of Kabul.

Though not educated in a formal sense, Ranjit Singh had a shrewd intellect. He was overwhelmed by the host of ideas, which besieged his mind. Not philosophical or speculative in any way, he was deeply interested in the how and why of things. He

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thought in plain terms and simplified even the most complex issues by his extraordinary common sense. This remarkable understanding of the vicissitude of human affairs he acquired not through rote but by meditating over the slips and steps of his own life. Ranjit Singh never ceased learning from others due to his restless curiosity. Self-schooled and self-scanned, he charted his own course. Victor Jacquemont, not an Empire man, who was commissioned by the French government to visit India for his scientific studies, has given a vivid and candid appraisal of Ranjit Singh's intellectual gifts. Jacquemont wrote in his journal on 16th March, 1830:

> "He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have seen and his curiosity makes up for the entire apathy of the nation. He asked me a hundred thousand questions about India, the British Empire, Bonaparte, the world in general, the other one, hell and paradise and others of the same kind."[38]

In his account, Jacquemont cites some of the questions that Ranjit Singh asked, "Have you seen Bonaparte? What sciences do you know? What are your principles of governance?" Ranjit Singh's curiosity about the European history and institutions was unbounded. He wanted specific information on the population in European countries. He asked for details on the British armed forces, taxation, the principles of civil and criminal law and lastly on the nature of scientific research for the promotion of industrial development.

A forward-looking man, Ranjit Singh realised the value of science and technology in the building of a state. That is why he thought that the conventional method of guerrilla warfare which had proved successful against Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali would be of no use. He engaged in service European officers to modernize his army. He was no pioneer in this respect. Tipu, Mahadaji Sindia and Daulat Rao Holkar had employed European officers to train their troops and improve guns. He had set up Ordnance factories in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Jammu and Srinagar, where guns and mortars were manufactured. Lehna Singh Majithia took special interest in the technological development, and Qadir Baksh wrote a treatise on the *Art of Gunnery*.

Despite his best efforts, Ranjit Singh could not advance much in scientific warfare as to stand up to the European discipline and artillery fire because advanced technology cannot be adopted while continuing a traditional way of life. Passive imitation can lead nowhere. Ideas foreign to another social environment cannot evolve if imported from outside. Transported flowers decay in unsympathetic climate.

The Punjab society in Ranjit Singh's times was deeply conservative, hierarchical, layered, status-conscious, largely rural and fanatically traditional, impervious to new ideas and experiences. Because of the social and economic realities of the times, which handicapped him, Ranjit Singh could not break through the existing framework of agricultural economy and build up a base for the scientific and technological development.

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Like Machiavelli, Ranjit Singh recognised the importance of religion and maintenance of its sanctity in his kingdom. He suffered from no sectarian religious bias, which is testified by Charles Metcalfe.[39] In his appointments to high offices, he used talents of all religions, and made no distinction whatsoever.[40] Jacquemant notes that Ranjit Singh was 'a Sikh by profession, sceptic and every year he pays his donations at Umritsar or very similar these donations are paid at the tombs of several Muhammadan saints'.[41]

The question of what kind of Government was suitable to India had figured in the British parliament towards the end of the 18th century. The British Parliament had impeached Warren Hastings, the acknowledged founder of the British rule in India, for his misdemeanours in India. Edmund Burke impeached Warren Hastings for trenching on the rights of Indian people. Dr Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer and the literary titan who edited the proceedings of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and who was the near contemporary of Ranjit Singh, wrote about the nature of the government suitable to India:

> "I am clear that the best plan for the government of India is a despotic governor, for if he be a good man, it is evidently the best government and supposing him to be a bad man, it is better to have one plunderer than many. A governor whose power is checked lest other plunder. But if despotic he sees that the less he lets other plunder, the less there will be for himself, so he restrains them, and though he plunders, the country is gainer compared with being under by many."

Sir Lepel Griffin while summing up Ranjit Singh's performance as a ruler wrote, "The Sikh monarchy was Napoleonic in the suddenness of its rise, the brilliance of its success, and the completeness of its overthrow."[42] He adds that Ranjit Singh's victories had no permanent results, his possessions, like a faggot of sticks, bound during his lifetime by the force of his impressive will, fell asunder the moment the retaining hand was severed.[43] According to Griffin, the downfall of the Sikh monarchy was simply due to the fact that the authority of Ranjit Singh was personal, and drew no part of its strength from an ancient house – his successors did not inherit the character.[44] Lepel Griffin holds Ranjit Singh entirely responsible for the disintegration of his monarchy. But he ignores that his ill-starred successors were to play a nefarious role in the extinction of his kingdom. It is true, as Griffin says, that Ranjit Singh's rule was personal and that he had centralised the authority in his hands. Griffin overlooks that monarchy was the only form of government adopted in the country for centuries, and that the democratic institutions were alien to the Indian traditional notion of governance.*

* Maharaja Ranjit Singh's conquests and Possessions were strong and stable. No body revolted during his lifetime and even after. His entire empire was annexed by the Britishers and Pakistan

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Curiously enough, Griffin overlooks the British factor that operated in the last years of Ranjit Singh's life. The British by then had spread their Intelligence network and were supplying vital information on Ranjit Singh's civil and military administration to the Governor-General in Calcutta.[46] In British circles, there was common talk about the collapse of Ranjit Singh's kingdom after his death. Jacquemont has hinted at it in his Journal, and, so has Henry Lawrence in his writings.

As the chief of one of the fighting clans, which he had vanquished one by one by bribery, battle, manipulation and parleys, he created the kingdom of Punjab until it stretched from the Khyber to the Sutlej and northward to Kashmir. Ranjit Singh remains a cult personality. He unified the nobles, the clerics and common people who looked on him as their guardian. By any standards, he was a statesman, who, out of anarchy and chaos, had created a State and made Punjab a power to reckon with. There were also in him, at times, glimmerings of Punjabi nationalism. His task was enormous; his time was short but by the force of his genius he turned the tide of Indian history, and succeeded in striking out in new direction.

Ranjit Singh's greatness was formed without a master, and expired without a follower. In the government of his kingdom, he stood alone and absolute. In his own time, no speculative thought stirred or discovery was made. But for him, the Punjab and Kashmir might have been a prey to anarchy. In statecraft, he showed remarkable foresight, resilience, skills and elasticity of mind. He was capable of dealing with the British on equal terms though by succumbing to the Treaties, he became a prisoner of the system, which unleashed the forces inimical to the interests of his kingdom. He gave the people the benefit of a free and equal tolerance, and never allowed anyone to oppress others on ground of religion. His was indeed a heterogeneous state based on harmony of religious faiths and capacities of different communities, irrespective of status. He, thus gave, a concept of pluralistic society, a sense of partnership with other communities, something like what the elected Augustus Ceaser had practised.

Whatever might be substantial gains, political and military or his civil administration, they began to evaporate greatly with Ranjit Singh's death. His highly incompetent volatile self-destructive successors, lacking political instinct, gambled away all that Ranjit Singh had built by personal sacrifices and tactical skills and, in a spirit of bravado, they committed a political suicide leading to the liquidation of his kingdom and its annexation by the British in 1849. And the prophecy attributed to

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inherited his territory from Sutlej to Khyber. Olf Carol writes, "Ranjit Singh had wrested from Afghan their fairest province not only those east of Indus where Kabul rulers could claim no racial affinity, but Peshawar itself and Bannu, fertile gardens inhabited by proud people of Afghan and Pathan stock. Maharaja Ranjit Singh undertook stong measures to subdue and control the furious tribes of north-western frontier. These tribes had not ever been subjugated and brought under control."

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him '*sab lal ho jayega*' became a reality. Ranjit Singh's tragedy was that he left a rich heritage of unassimilated ideas. But that is another story!

– V. N. Datta

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ACQUISITION OF KOH-I-NOOR DIAMOND

The world famous diamond, Koh-i-noor, at present part of the British Crown Jewels, is completely of Indian origin. The part this glittering diamond has played in the vicissitudes of Indian dynasties, no one can deny and how the diamond changed hands, makes an interesting and lively reading. Certainly, the magnificent and matchless diamond is not known to have ever been bought or sold but it surely changed hands as a result of conquests from one conqueror to the other as a symbol of power and glory and was regarded as the greatest treasure in India and whose value was beyond estimate. Of course, it has remained and traveled in as many as four countries – India, Persia, Afghanistan and England. Rightly, the origin of Koh-i-noor, the great diamond of history and romance, for which wars have been fought, kingdoms have been sacked and generations of soldiers and kings have lost their honour and lives, is still a tangle of fable and fact.

Different Versions of Origin

One version says that the stone was first discovered about 5,000 years back in the bed of the Lower Godavari river, near Machlipatnam, in Central India. While others say, it was the produce of the mines of Golconda, in Andhra Pradesh. Yet another Source says that it was found in the hills of Amravati, a district headquarters of Maharashtra and it was worn by Raja Karna, the legendary son of Surya, He is said to have fought the Mahabharta war, with the diamond tied, as a talisman, around his arm at the distant period of about 5000 years ago or 3000 B.C.[1] After Karna's tragic end on the battlefield, at the hands of Arjun, the diamond passed into the hands of the Pandvas. Arjun delivered the same to his brother, Yudhishtra, who presented the same to Raja Parikshata, while preparing himself for the exile. Legend has it that the

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Sun-God gave this diamond to his disciple Satrajit but Persain, the latter's younger brother, snatched it from him. Persain was killed by a lion in the forest and one Jamavant took this diamond from the person of Persain and delivered it to Lord Krishna who restored it to Satrajit. However, later this diamond again came into the hands of Lord Krishna as Satrajit gave hand of his daughter Satyabhama in marriage to Lord Krishna and this diamond was given in dowry. But Lord Krishna did not retain it and gave it back to the Sun-God. Thereafter, it fell into the hands of the ruler of Punjab, Porus, a majestic person of 7 feet 6 inches in height, of pleasing personality and kingly bearing, believed to be the direct descendant of king Janmejya of Inderprastha[2], who dared hold the Macedonian king, Alexander the Great, about fourteen miles west of the battlefield of Chillianwala and some thirty miles South-West of the town of Jehlum in 326 B.C. Then the dynasties of Maurya, Harsha, and Raja Lalit Latta proudly retained this diamond, only to be passed on to the Khilji, Tughlaq, Mughal, Durrani, Abdali, Sikh and British houses in succession.

Another account carried the diamond to Raja Chandergupta, also known as Vikramadytia, the founder of Vikrama era of Hindus and the ruler of the great Hindu Kingdom of Ujjain in Central India, who had successfully driven the Scythians out of India. However, after his demise, there was utter chaos in the country for a long time and this diamond remained in possession of Parmar dynasty of Malwa, the last ruler being Raja Ram Dev. Some say, the diamond originally adorned the third eye of an image of Shiva, in a temple somewhere in Telangana, and was perhaps gouged out by Prince Alla-ud-din Khilji's forces in the sack of Deccan between 1296 and 1312. Lady Login recorded that the diamond, originally found in the mines of Golconda[3], remained for generations in the possession of the Rajas of Malwa from whom, in the early fourteenth century, Allauddin Khilji obtained it by conquest. Allauddin had defeated Rai Ladhar Rao, the ruler of Malwa, in 1306 and acquired it. The record appears to be silent from the year 1320 to 1526 as to how the diamond slipped away from the Sultans of Delhi after the end of the Khilji rule. A selection from Rooz-Namah-i-Kawah, Persian, by Sayed Mohammad Ali Jamal-Zada, written over half a century ago, said that this diamond was associated with Mahabharta and that its original weight was 293-3/8 carats. A century before Christ, it was in possession of the Raja of Ujjain. According to some historians, the first authentic reference to the peerless jewel occurs in the *Babarnama – The Memoirs of Babar*. Alla-ud-din Khilji acquired it from the Raja of Malwa, in Madhya Pardesh. It fell into the hands of the Hindu ruler of Gwalior, in Madhya Pradesh, and was presented to Humayun, the only son of the Mughal Emperor, Babar, by the family of Raja Bikramajit, killed at Panipat in 1526, in the first battle of Panipat, fought between Abraham Lodhi and Babar, as a token of gratitude for protection, or *Peshkash*. Hamayun, in turn, presented the same to his

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father, who returned it to his son with his blessings. This version is, however, challenged, though partly only, that Babar's son got this unique gem from the family of the Raja of Gwalior, who sided with Ibraham Lodhi in the battle of Panipat, at Agra and not at Panipat, where he had fallen. J.M. Shelat says: "So severe has been the fight around him (Ibraham Lodhi) that, where killed, five to six thousand men had fallen around him. The casualties included Vikaramaditya of Gwalior."[4] Like N.B. Sen, some contend that this diamond was found at Kollur (Kolar) mine on the right bank of Krishna river, in Karnataka, and was presented by the Oeccan General, Mir Jumla, to the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, in 1656. Waldemar Hansen[5] has given details as to how the diamond traveled into the royal treasury of Shah Jahan. During the reign of Shah Jehan, the riches of Golconda prompted Aurangzeb to cross swords with the Sultan of Golconda. Golconda's annual tribute as a protectorate of the Mughals fell for ever in arrears and its rulers received peremptory demands: he must come up with laggard payment at once. Mir Mohammad said, known by his famous surname, Mir Jumla, a rich diamond merchant and Vizier[6], soon became a dangerous rival of the Sultan, and miraculously escaped his own seizure. Shah Jehan appointed him Commander of five thousand horse and required the Sultan not to detain the Mir Jumla family or their property. Abdullah Qutab Shah, Sultan of Golconda, according to *Akbarnama*, when Hamayun was down with illness, that appeared to be fatal, Mir Abul-Baqa, a reputed servant, advised Babar to sacrifice the best of one's possessions, suggesting to give away the Koh-i-noor as charity. Babar, however, did not agree and the same remained in the Mughal Treasury. Later in the summer of 1544, when Hamayun reached Persia, as a refugee, he offered this diamond along with 250 rubies of Badakhshan to Shah Tahmasp of Persia, as a return, for the great reception he received in the latter's dominions. The value of those presents repaid the total expenditure of the reception and hospitality accorded to him from beginning to end more than four times over. One Khur Shah, the ambassador of Sultan Ibrahim Qutb Shah of Golconda, at the Persian court, told that Shah Tahmasp did not value this diamond so much, and afterwards sent to India, as a present to Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar, through Aqa Islam "Mihtar Jamal". This happened in 1547. This version is corroborated by *Tarikh-i-Firishta*. It is believed that this diamond remained in possession of the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar (Deccan) and the Qutab Shahi dynasty of Golconda for a period of 109 years from 1547 to 1656. Any way, all historians agreed that the diamond formed a part of the hereditary Mughal treasure and remained in the possession of the Mughal dynasty, having been worn by Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, until Nadir Shah invaded India in the year 1739, during the reign of Mohammad Shah Rangila, who was ceremoniously deprived of its possession by the cruel invader.

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Nadir Shah Removed the Diamond

Whittaker was of the the view that Muhi-ud-din Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughals, had made use of the diamond as one of the eyes of the Peacock Throne – Takhat-i-Taoos, and that Nadir Shah carried off and broke up this throne, thus gaining possession of the famous gem. But, acording to more authentic account, when Nadir Shah seized the Delhi Treasury, this diamond was found missing and, for a long time, all efforts to obtain it failed, and then with a clue supplied to him, he procured it by trick.

Nadir Shah, born in December 1688, in the castle of Dastgarh, fifty miles north of Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan, from a petty booster and highway robber, became the greatest warrior and conquerer Persia had ever produced, the deliverer of his country and the terror of the whole of Asia. He set out to conquer the territory and plunder the wealthiest kings falling under his feet. Kabul was taken possession of and the inhabitants put to the sword. He found in the Kabul Treasury two million five hundred thousand rupees and effects to the value of two millions more, in which were included four thousand complete suits of armour, inlaid with gold, four thousand of polished steel, four thousand of coats of mail for horses, which had been deposited there by the Emperor Shah Jehan. Nadir Shah then crossed Indus and marched towards Delhi, unmindful of the swollen rivers and streams and unhampered by the tediousness of the long journey. On February 14, 1739, he reached the plains of Karnal, now in Haryana, and *lakhs* of soldiers of Nadir Shah and Mohammad Shah Rangila crossed their swords. On the third day, the Mughal armies found themselves routed by the forces of Nadir Shah, and the defeated monarch of Delhi resigned his crown to secure the clemency of the conqueror. The Persians immediately seized upon the ordnance, the military chest, the jewel office, the wardrobe and the armoury. The Red Fort of Delhi was also occupied by Nadir Shah on March 8, 1739. The latter then demanded twenty five *crores* of *rupees* as the war indemnity from the defeated king of Delhi. Mohammad Shah Rangila opened the treasury and presented its most valuable jewels and curiosities that had been accumulated by the chain of Mughal Emperors of India for generations together. They were vast heaps of gold and silver in coins and ingots, valuable vases set with diamonds, rubies and other precious gems, with a great variety of sumptuous furniture, diadems and thrones, including the famous Pea cock Throne, inlaid with pearls and precious stones, which had been constructed by Shah Jehan at a cost of six millions and a half sterling, according to the valuation put on it by Jean-Baptise Travernier. The chiefs of the Court and others also presented to Nadir Shah gifts valued at millions of *Rupees*.

Nadir Shah did not find the famous Koh-i-noor diamond among the valuables presented to him. A serious search for the missing gem did not bear fruit. At last, a woman from Rangila's harem gave away the secret, informing Nadir Shah that the

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Emperor wore it concealed in his turban, which he refused to lay aside on any occasion. Resort to a clever trick to secure the valuable diamond was the only means left with the conqueror. A grand Darbar was held in Delhi for reinstating Mohammad Shah Rangila on the Mughal throne, and to the surprise and amazement of the Mughal Emperor, Nadir Shah asked very politely his 'brother' for an exchange of turbans, as a token of brotherhood. The Mughal Emperor was taken aback by this move but before he could react, Nadir Shah, the conqueror of India, abruptly removed his own sheepskin head dress, glittering with a lump of costly gems, and replaced it with the turban of his 'brother'. The Rangila monarch still thought of cheating the one-time highway robber and seemed so indifferent to the incident that, for a moment, Nadir Shah began to fear that he had been misled by the *Kaneez* or her master. Hardly had he helped Mohammad Shah Rangila to ascend the throne of his ancestors, before he anxiously dismissed the Darbar and went to his tent and wildly unfurled the turban and, from the folds of the turban, discovered the long-coveted diamond. At the sight of the sparkling gem, that had turned the dark corners of the tent into a flash light, Nadir Shah cried out rapturously: 'Koh-i-noor' (The Mountain of Light), and the name has clung to it since. Thus Koh-i-noor made its visible entry into the world of gems on May 1, 1739, in the Darbar Hall in Delhi. His work was now over and he signalled his army to prepare for the march to his own country which started on May 5, 1739. He had amassed huge wealth during his stay in India and the total wealth carried away by Nadir Shah is described by historians "as being between eight and thirty Krores (8,000,000 and 30,000,000) of money, exclusive of jewels, rich stuffs and valuable property, among which was included the famous Koh-i-noor diamond." Fraser wrote that he carried away jewels from the Emperor and the Omerahs, treasure, goods and assets of the value of seventy Krores; his officers and soldiers carried ten Krores and he spent twenty *Krore* more on the maintenance of his army in India, giving them arrears of pay and a gratuity. He carried away 1000 eunuchs, 130 writers, 200 smiths, 300 masons, 100 stonecutters and 200 carpenters.[7]

Nadir Shah was not, however, destined to live long. Aspiring for the throne and the vast treasure, including Koh-i-noor,[8] of his uncle, Ali Kuli Khan planned to murder him. Fatigued with a long march, Nadir Shah, then 60, had retired to his tent, fixed at Fatahabad, in the neighbourhood of Mashhad, and slept quietly till midnight of June 8, 1747. One hired assassin gave a sabre blow at him, who fell, and several conspirators hacked him to pieces, the severed head lying at some distance.

The Diomand Returns to India

After the assassination of Nadir Shah, Koh-i-noor did not go, as a trophy, to Ali Kuli Khan, the nephew of Nadir Shah, who committed the murder of his uncle, but

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it passed on to Raza Kuli, the son of Nadir Shah and, in course of time, as a legacy came to his son, Shah Rukh Mirza. The Diamond not allow Shah Rukh Mirza, the father-in-law of Taimur Shah, son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and brought unanticipated disaster to him. Mir Alam, a rebel chief, overthrew the Shah and blinded him, but failed to lay his hand on the diamond, to which the helpless Shah clung tenaciously. In early 1751, Mir Alam had his bad days and he was butchered to death. Shah Rukh Mirza was loved by Ahmad Shah Abdali, for whom Nadir Shah has great regard, and in 1751, he was restored to the throne by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the founder of the Durrani Afghan Empire. The Shah was then obliged to part with the Koh-i-noor, as the price for the throne or as a reward for it. Ahmad Shah Abdali died on April 14, 1772[9] in the village of Murgha, in the Suleiman mountains. The man who had razed the Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, to the ground, by blowing it up with dynamite, was himself hit on the nose by a piece of brick, and the injury, so developed into a cancer, ultimately took his life, and the diamond stood bequeathed to his son Taimur Shah, from whom it descended to Shah Zaman.

On May 18, 1793, Taimur Shah breathed his last at Kabul, leaving no less than twenty one sons, from different wives. Shah Zaman succeeded to the throne after struggling for five days, but for more than six months the fate of the kingdom hung in the balance, there being a number of revolts and rebellion raised by the brothers and nephews of the Shah. Prince Mahmud, step brother of Shah Zaman, returned from Persia and defeated Shah Zaman, who repaired to Jalalabad to invoke the aid of his real brother, Shah Shujah, the Governor of Peshawar. On the way, he and his minister, Wafadar Khan, passed the night in a ravine and next morning made their way to the seat of a Shinwari Chief who received them with an outward show of respect, but secretly informed Mahmud of their capture and detention in Mulla Ashiq's fort. Shah Zaman had on his person valuable jewels, the famous Koh-i-noor diamond and the equally celebrated ruby, Pukhraj. When he found that the treacherous Shinwari chief, had made him a prisoner, the Shah resolved that neither of these gems should fall into his hands, nor into his brother's keeping. The diamond he concealed in a crack in the walls of his chamber and the ruby he threw into a deep irrigation channel. Mahmud blinded Shah Zaman, in 1801, and his treasure amounting to two *crores* of *Rupees* fell into his hands. Hardly two years had passed when, in a widespread riot between Sunnis and Shias, Shah Mahmud had to shut himself up in the citadel of Bala Hissar, and Shuja assumed the title of Shah Shujah (July 13, 1803) and soon fell upon the Shinwari chief and recovered the Koh-i-noor and the Pukhraj. In 1809, the British Ambassador found Shah Shujah seated on the throne of Afghanistan at Peshawar. He was in possession of almost all the jewels, including Koh-i-noor, and other valuable property pertaining to the crown which had been entrusted to him by his real brother,

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Shah Zaman. The Ambassador, Elphinstone, had met Shah Shujah in the Bala Hissar at Peshawar, whose real dress, according to him, consisted of 'a green tunic, with large flowers worked in gold and precious stones, over which were a large breastplate of diamonds, shaped like two flattened fleurs-de-lis, an ornament of the same kind on each thigh, large emerald bracelets on the arm (above the elbow), and many other jewels in many places. In one of these bracelets was the koh-i-noor, known to be one of the largest diamonds in the world'. In early February 1810, Shuja-ul-mulk had been driven out of his kingdom, and was approaching to seek refuge in the Punjab. In September 1810, Mohammad Azam Khan, brother of Wazir Fateh Khan, inflicted a signal defeat on Shuja-ul-mulk, and drove him across the Indus again.

In November 1811, Shah Zaman, along with his family and other dependents, visited Lahore and, for a while, stayed in the city but, finding himself in a state of neglect at the hands of the rising Sikh Maharaja, went to Rawalpindi. His brother, Shuja-ul-mulk, lost his ablest General, Akram Khan, and took to flight. They both sent a son of Shah Zaman, to Ludhiana to seek British assistance but David Octerlony politely refused to meddle in the domestic broils at Kabul. Hardly some time had passed when, in 1812, Jehan Dad Khan, the Commissioner of Attock, had arrested Shuja-ul-mulk and sent him to his own brother, Atta Mohammad Khan, the Governor of Kashmir, where he was held a prisoner. It might have been thought that the Koh-i-noor could be easily extracted from this Prisoner, but it was not with him at that time. Shah Zaman had already escorted, in royal style, the family of Shuja-ul-mulk as well to Lahore for safety. Maharaja Ranjit Singh not only personally received them but had provided them with adequate lodgings and daily allowances. Just then, the Maharaja got the news that Shah Mahmud was advancing towards Kashmir in order to conquer it. Wafa Begam, wife of Shah Shuja-ul-mulk, was terrified at the news and grew anxious about the fate of her husband, then a prisoner in Kashmir. She sent a request to the Maharaja, through Faqir Aziz-ud-din, for getting her husband set free from the prison, for which services she promised to surrender him the famous Koh-i-noor diamond. The Maharaja agreed to the proposal and, soon afterwards the allied forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Wazir Fateh Khan marched upon the valley and defeated Atta Mohammad Khan, Governor of Kashmir, at Shergarh. The allied forces of Afghans and Sikhs took possession of the Shergarh Fort. Shuja-ul-mulk was found there in Kashmiri dungeons and was moved to the camp of Diwan Mohkam Chand, commander of the Sikh army, where his handcuffs and fetters were taken off. The Diwan assured him of his personal safety and security and told him that, under orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he would be taken to Lahore where he was to join the members of his family. Thereafter, the Diwan brought him safe to Lahore in spite of Wazir Fateh Khan's jealousy on this account.

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Shuja-ul-mulk, the ex-king of Afghanistan, was received by the Maharaja of the Punjab with all the honours due to his rank, the heir-apparent, Kanwar Kharak Singh, having been sent to Shahdara, on the outskirts of Lahore, to receive His Majesty. The house in the city, known as Mubarak Haveli, near Shah Almi Gate or Patri Darwaza, belonging to Diwan Lakhpat Rai, was placed at the disposal of the king, his family and followers. Although many days passed by, neither Shuja-ul-mulk nor his senior wife, Wafa Begam, bothered to comply with their part of the bargain, so solemnly made only sometime back. The Maharaja then sent Diwan Moti Ram, Faqir Aziz-ud-din and others, to demand the great diamond Koh-i-noor from the ex-king. The Shah denied being in possession of that diamond, that had once adorned the throne of the Mughals and later that of Afghanistan, while Wafa Begam declared that it had been pawned for a large sum of money, with the merchants at Kabul, to provide her husband with funds in his late expeditions.[10] The eagerness of the Maharaja to obtain, and the reluctance of the Afghan to resign this renowned jewel appeared to have been of equal intensity. No greater severity was employed than appeared absolutely necessary to vanquish the obstinacy of the Shah, and none was omitted which promised the accomplishment of that end. Disbelieving these assertions, the Maharaja placed guards around Mubarak Haveli, and disallowed any access or egress without strict search. Finding that the severity of mere restraint was of little avail in inducing the Afghan king to part with so rich a prize, under the contract, the king was subjected to absolute deprivation of food; for two full days nothing was allowed to be cooked in the kitchen of that Haveli, and the entire family of the ex-king, children and servants including, suffered from actual hunger. But their firmness was even proof against trial, and the Maharaja now determined to proceed with more art, and ordered food to be supplied. On April 1, 1813, there were produced, in the Darbar, two letters purporting to be from the Shah to Wazir Fateh Khan and to other Afghan chiefs, descriptive of his sufferings, and praying for his deliverance. The letters having been intercepted, it was now assumed to be indispensable to take adequate precautions against the intrigues and machinations of the Shah, and a guard of two companies of trusted Sikhs was added to that previously set over the Haveli. Moreover, threats of transfer of the Shah's person to the Fort of Gobindgarh, at Amritsar, with treatment of the most galling and injurious kind, were resorted to in order to enforce compliance with the demand for the precious gem. The Shah vainly thought that he could still bluff the Sikh Maharaja. He asked for two months' time to enable him to procure the diamond from the bankers, with whom it was pawned for as huge sum of money as six crores of *Rupees*. The Maharaja reluctantly allowed the time solicited, and there was a temporary cessation of severities.[11]

On some intelligence, the Maharaja resumed acts of severity , before the expiry

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of the period of two months, and the Shah, wearied out by them, agreed to give up his resistance to the delivery of the Koh-i-noor. The Maharaja sent Faqir Aziz-ud-din, Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh and Jamadar Khushal Singh, to demand the diamond from the Shah and the latter sent by their hands a large Pukhraj (topaz) of a yellow colour, which the Shah represented to be the diamond. On this being shown to the Maharaja, who was then in the octagonal Tower, he sent for jewelers to ascertain whether this was the Koh-i-noor or not; and on being told by them it was not the Koh-i-noor, he kept the Topaz, but sent immediate orders to place the Shah again under restraint (*tungai*), and to prevent him from eating or drinking until the diamond demanded was given up. After this restraint had been continued about eight hours, and the pinch of hunger was felt by the Shah's family, his fortitude gave way and he gave up the diamond to the *vakils*, who immediately brought it the Maharaja where it was shown to the jewelers who had remained with the Maharaja at the place until the return of the *vakils*. The Maharaja had dressed for the evening Darbar and was seated in his chair, when the diamond was brought to him in a box lined with crimson velvet, into which it had been fitted, and was presented to the Maharaja, who expressed great satisfaction. It was, at that time, set singly in an enamelled setting with strings to be worn as an armlet. He placed it on his arm, admired it and after some time replaced in its box which, with the topaz, he made over to Misr Beli Ram, to be placed in the Toshakhana under the charge of Misr Basti Ram, Toshkhania. The Toshakhana then in the Moti Bazar, at the house of Ramsakar Garwai (later called Misr Lal Singh's Toshakhana), where the Diamond was placed in a strong chest. So the most famous jewel known to mankind traveled into the Toshakhana belonging to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the lion of the Punjab, on June 1, 1813. The guard on the deposed Afghan king was withdrawn and he and his kith and kin were left more at liberty to move about in the Sikh capital, which he often did in a state palanquin. The Shah had parted with this gem in obedience to the word of his wife, Wafa Begam, but he appeared to have thought of snatching the same from the Maharaja, who had saved the precious life of the man and who was later brought to the throne of Afghanistan by the joint endeavour of the Maharaja and the British Government. The Kardar of Gujranwala intercepted a letter[12] from a Pathan written by Kazi Sher Mohammad, a follower of the Afghan King, addressed to Mohammad Azam Khan, the new Governor of Kashmir, proposing a joint attack on Lahore with Wazir Fateh Khan to assassinate the benevolent Maharaja. The latter apprised the Shah of the contents of the letter but he pleaded innocence. The Pathan was severely dealt with and thrown in prison, from where, later on, the Shah purchased his release by paying a sum of twenty thousand rupees to the Darbar.[13] However, the Shah now felt that he should not hope for the usurpation of the already parted gem, and within a year of his delivering the same, he made good his escape with his family,

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taking the guard with him.

Value of the Diamond

In India, it is believed that the celebrated diamond is priceless. Shah Shuja had represented at Lahore that he had pawned the same for six crores of rupees in Kabul. On June 7, 1813, the Maharaja showed the diamond to the jewelers and enquired about its price. It was found in weight equal to three hundred and a few more '*Surakhs*', and in value it was declared price-less as no other similar diamond existed anywhere else. Abdur-Rahim, Khan Khanan's Persian translation of *Babarnama* (followed by Leyden, Erskine and King), placed its value at half the daily expenses of the whole world; and Abul Fazl, in *Akbarnama*, and Mohammad Qasim Frishta accepted it as correct. Pavet de Courteille, however, had translated from the Turkish original thus. "Il est tellement estime, qu'un connasseur disait quason prix equivalaila defense d'un pour du monde entier" (*Memoirs de Babar*, Paris 1871). Dr. Login attempted to value it at two lakh pounds. David Ross valued it at over a quarter of a million pounds sterling. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had sent one of his ministers to Wafa Begam, wife of the Shah, to get information as to its value. David Ross gave the substance of the minister's report thus:

> "A few months after the diamond in question came into possession of the Maharaja, I was called back from Jalandhar to Lahore, and deputed by His Highness to call upon Wafa Begam and inquire her opinion. By order of His Highness, therefore, I visited Wafa Begam, and begged her to inform me what she had heard or knew to be its value. Wafa Begam, in reply, said that could not be described in one way, but in several ways. According to what she had heard from her ancestors, its value is equal to a heap of precious stones and gold mohars filling a space marked by five stones, each thrown on four sides and upwards by a strong young man. Some have declared even this an inadequate estimate; others have said that its value is equal to half the daily income of the whole world. The real price at which it has passed from one hand to another is the submission of the weak to the powerful. That purchased it for the Saduzai family, and that transferred it at last into the hands of the Maharaja."[14] So the Maharaja rightly remarked about its real value: 'Five blows with shoes'.

Diamond with the Sikh Maharajas

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had the diamond set in a bracelet which he wore on all public occasions. After a little while, the precious jewel was taken by the Maharaja to Amritsar under charge of Misr Beli Ram, alongwith other articles of the Toshakhana, and carried alongwith the Maharaja, wherever he went, under a strong guard. Misr Makraj, Treasurer of Maharaja Dalip Singh, told Sir John Login:

> "It was always carried on a camel in a large trunk, placed on the leading camel (but this

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was known only to the people of the Toshakhana), the whole string of camels, which generally consisted of about one hundred, being well guarded by troops. In camp, this box was placed between two others alike, close to the pole of the tent, Misr Belie Ram's bed very close to it, none but his relatives and confidential servants having access to the place.

"For four or five years, it was worn as an armlet, then fitted up as a *sirpesh* for the turban, with a diamond drop of a *tolah* weight (now in the Toshakhana) attached to it. It was worn in this manner for about a year, on three or four occasions, when it was again made up as an armlet, with a diamond on each side, as at present. It has now been used as an armlet for upwards of twenty years."[15]

The Maharaja was very fond of hoarding a treasure and despite distributing a vast quantity of wealth, possessed *crores* worth of jewels, gems, Pearls, diamonds etc., the Koh-i-noor apart. He was very happy to show this diamond to his guests. Baron Charles Hugel, a German traveler, happened to visit the Sikh Darbar in the middle of January 1836, when the Maharaja said,[16] "I am sure you would like to see the famous diamond. Will you look at it now?" Four shields were brought, on which was laid the most superb assortment of jewels; but the celebrated Koh-i-noor, or Mountain of Light, the largest diamond in the world, attracted Hugel's admiration above all. He described: "It (Koh-i-noor) is of the shape and size of a hen's egg, exquisitely white, and brilliant beyond description. It is set in an armlet, having a diamond on either side, for which the Maharaja told me he gave 13,000 and 100,00 rupees (£13,000 and £10,000) in Amritsar. Both of these had belonged to Shah Shujah.... Ranjit put this treasure into my hand that I might examine it more closely, and I must confess that the thought of the enormous value set by fancy on this single jewel caused me many a deep reflexion. How many thousand poor families might be made happy for the price at which this diamond was estimated. In an instant, I looked on it as something of more than earthly value, as the means of happiness; but it could only bless by being parted with, and then it would become so much dead capital in the hands of another; its existence only becoming really valuable while it being transferred from one to another party, like a bank note or a bill of exchange..... Ranjit Singh was much pleased with my long examination of this treasure, and roused me from my reverie by asking me how I like it." Then, on July 15, 1837, a British doctor came to the Maharaja and through Faqir Aziz-ud-din sought permission to examine carefully the Koh-i-noor and other jewels. Misr Beli Ram was ordered accordingly to fetch the box containing the bejeweled ornaments and to show the same to the Doctor. On July 17, the British Doctor inspected the box containing jewels and felt greatly pleased to see the Koh-i-noor, the armlet, the turquoise of late Nadir Shah and several other valuable articles. The Maharaja was equally happy to bestow a robe of honour to the guest. On July 13, 1838, the Maharaja showed the diamond to W.C. Osborne, who says,[17] "It

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certainly is a most magnificent diamond, about an inch and a half in length and upwards of an inch in width, and stands out from the setting, about half an inch, it is in the shape of an egg, and is set in a bracelet between two very handsome diamonds of about half its size. It is valued at three million streling, is very brilliant, and without a flaw of any kind."[17] Such examples can be easily multiplied.

The Maharaja fell seriously ill and shortly before his death, he had given away, in charity, valuables worth *lakhs* of *Rupees* and was determined to deliver the Koh-i-noor to the Brahmans of Jaggannath at Puri (in Orissa). Bhai Gobind Ram remarked that the Maharaja had very often desired that this diamond had been left by the old kings and none of the Sultans had taken it alongwith himself, and so he had a mind to entrust all the affairs of the state to Kharak Singh and himself move away slowly to pilgrimage, and to 'Make over the said piece of diamond to Sri Jagannath ji, according to the custom of his predecessors'. He further added that the Maharaja had signalled for the arrival of that auspicious hour all of a sudden. By a sign, the Maharaja expressed his wish that soon its *sankalp* should be made and it should be sent over to the temple of Jagannath. The Maharaja had so ordered Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, the Prime Minister, who asked Misr Beli Ram Toshakhania to present the diamond. The Misr objected saying that 'It was only fit to be possessed by a king, and to whom could it be given in charity?'. The prime Minister said 'to the Brahmans at Jagannath'. But Misr Beli Ram stated that it ought to remain with the Maharaja's descendants, and that already twenty one *lakhs* of *Rupees*, jewels, and gold, etc., had been given away to the Brahmans. Lastly, he put forward an excuse that the jewel was lying at Amritsar. The Maharaja, speechless as he then was produced wrinkles upon his forehead on hearing this discussion. Thus, the diamond was saved from being given in charity by the Maharaja who acquired it from an Afghan monarch, 26 years and 26 days before his death; but the Misr had exposed himself to the greatest enmity on the part of Raja Dhian Singh Dogra for disobeying the Raja, and ultimately sacrificed his life. Still the diamond was destined to be removed out of India to be set in the British Queen Mother's Crown.

After the Maharaja's death, the diamond devolved on his successors, Maharaja Kharak Singh, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh, all of whom died prematurely. Lastly, it was inherited by Maharaja Dalip Singh, the sole surviving male member of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's family.

Koh-i-Noor carried to England

The Punjab lost her independence on March 29, 1849, in consequence of the British victory over the Sikhs in the Second Anglo-Sikh War. The Terms granted to Maharaja Dalip Singh by Henry Miers Elliot, Foreign Secretary to the Government of

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India, on the part of East India Company, and accepted at Lahore on that date and ratified by the Governor General on April 5, 1849, included the surrender of the Koh-i-noor diamond to the queen of England. Earlier, Lord Hardinge had, at the time of the Treaty of March 1846, seen this fabulous diamond, contained in 'a small tin box enveloped in a shabby cloth'. Not curiously, shortly before the decree of annexation went forth, Lord Dalhousie had written to Henry Lawrence to make every disposition for the safe custody of the State jewels, which were about to fall into the lap of the English as a windfall. Great care was, therefore, taken, especially as among the Punjab jewels was the matchless Koh-i-noor, the Mountain of Light, which it was intended should be expressly surrendered by the young Maharaja to the English Queen, Victoria. Doctor Henry Login, Master of Lahore citadel or popularly known as the 'Killah-Ka-Malik', was formally made keeper of the State Toshakhana or Treasury, with the State jewels; and, as Login stated, 'the Koh-i-noor was placed in my hands'. He arranged all the jewels in a fine box he had made and lined, as previously the native treasurers had rolled up in bits of rags, and stowed away in such queer places.

Queen Victoria, conscious of the piratic nature of terms of the Treaty of Lahore, 1849, declined to accept the Koh-i-noor as a gift 'under the circumstances in which it has been offered her'. Although it would be absurd to fix a price that would be near its intrinsic value, Dr. Login thought that Rs. 200,000 would meet the purpose. In a private letter dated October 24, 1849, addressed to Lady Login, he stated:

> "I think I told you that I had urged Henry Lawrence to propose to Lord Dalhousie that the Queen's subjects all over the Empire should be allowed to embrace the opportunity of showing their love and goodwill, by offering it to her, I feel certain that it would be easy to raise a sufficient sum to purchase it, and it would have more value in her eyes, given her in this way by her people, as a token of their respect and honour, the money to be spent for the good benefit of her new subjects here, by making the Punjab to bloom like a garden. This may easily be done, by giving employment to the 100,000 men who have been cast adrift, making roads, bridges, and canals, and establishing schools among them, and thus showing that we are above taking any thing from them in a shabby way."[18]

Dr. Login continued:

> "This would be one way of converting the possession of the Koh-i-noor into a blessing instead of a curse, which the natives say it has been...."[19]

Misr Makraj, for upwards of thirty two years employed in the Toshakhana at Lahore, during the reign of the Sikh Maharajas, and later continuing as Assistant in charge of the Toshakhana with the British, was eloquent in his expressions of relief at being set free from the sole responsibility, for as he said, ' the Koh-i-noor had been fatal to so many of his family that he had hardly hoped ever to survive the charge of it.'[20] Lord Dalhousie, who grabbed this diamond from the young Maharaja, could not

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endorse the viewpoint of Dr. Login and simply scoffed at the idea of ill luck. In his letters, he enumerated the long line of conquerors who held it from Akbar the Great to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and further told how when the last named desired his plundered guest, Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, to tell him the real value of the diamond, the latter replied: "Its value is 'good fortune', for whoever holds it is victorious over his enemies." This anecdote was narrated to Lord Dalhousie by Faqir Nur-ud-din, who had himself been one of the messengers from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Hence, the diamond was shabbily snatched from the young Maharaja, the ward of the British Government, to be made over to Queen Victoria of England.

Removed to England

Dr. Login had brought the Koh-i-noor from the old Toshakhana and placed it with the other valuables in the Citadel, under guard. Many desired to see this famous glittering diamond and, under advice of Misr Makraj, Dr. Login would always show it to visitors, keeping it in his own hand, 'with the ribbon cords that tied it as an armlet twisted round his fingers'. It was still set as an armlet, with a diamond on each side of the Koh-i-noor as a contrast of size. Still, there were many who would like to shoulder the responsibility to move this diamond of immense value to England, if so deputed. Dr. Login wrote: 'It is very amusing the requests I get from friends and acquaintances. One asks me to get him appointed to carry the Koh-i-noor to England...' But Lord Dalhousie would not risk the handling of this precious diamond in any manner. He visited Lahore and, in the utmost secrecy, took possession of the stone from Dr. Login who wrote, in his private letter dated July 16,1850 from Fatehgarh (Uttar Pradesh) to Lady Login:

> "I see by the papers that the Koh-i-noor has arrived in England, and that Mackeson, not Ramsay, gets all the credit of having brought it safely. This will not be exactly as Lord Dalhousie wished, as he was rather anxious on that score; but no doubt the court of Directors had their own ideas about it. I was one of the very few entrusted with the secret of its disposal. Indeed, they could not have got access to it without my knowledge, seeing that it never left my possession from the day I received it in charge; I may tell you now that it is safe, that Lord Dalhousie came to my quarters before he left Lahore, bringing with him a small bag, made by lady Dalhousie to hold it; and after I had formally made it over to him, he went into my room and fastened it round his waist, under his clothes, in my presence. Lord Dalhousie himself wrote out the formal receipt for the jewel, and there my responsibility ended, and I felt it a great load taken off me. All the members of the Board of Administration were present, and contersigned the document. The other jewels were also sealed up and made over.[21]

The receipt[22] itself was in the below mentioned form:

> I have received this day from Doctor Login into my personal possession, for transmission

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to England, the Koh-i-noor diamond, in the presence of the members of the Board of Administration, and of Sir Henry Elliot, K.C.B., Secretary to the Government of India.

(signed Dalhousie)
Lahore, December 7th,1849
(signed) H.M.Lawrenece
C.G.Mansel
John Lawrence
H.M.Ellict

This historic receipt dated December 7, 1849, was kept by Henry Login and he thought that to be 'something for my children to look at when I am gone.'

In the lately published "*Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie* edited by G.A. Baird, the following eventful and fascinating story of the diamond journeying to England has been given. Dalhousie wrote to his friend, George Couper: "The Koh-i-noor sailed from Bombay in H.M.S. Medea on 6th April (1850). I could not tell you at that time, for strict secrecy was observed, but I brought it from Lahore myself: I undertook the charge of it in a funk, and never was so happy in all my life, as when I got into the Treasury at Bombay. It was sewn and double sewn into a belt secured around my waist, one end through the belt fastened to a chain round my neck. It never left me day or night, except when I went to Dera Ghazie Khan, when I left it with Captain Ramsay (who has now joint charge of it), locked in a treasure-chest, and with strict orders that he was to sit upon the chest till I came back: My stars, what a relief it was to get rid of it." Doctor Login, a surgeon by profession remarked in later years that 'his skill with the needle then stood him in good stead, as it was he who acted *dirsi* (tailor) and sewed the jewel securely into its chamois-leather wallet. At Bombay, earlier, this diamond was detained for two months for want of the ship and, on account of this delay, it did not reach England before July 2, 1850. The H.M.S. Medea encountered many difficulties on her voyage before reaching England. The diamond was taken first to the East India House and then delivered by J.W. Logg, the Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, to Queen Victoria[23], at a levee in St. James palace, the next day. The Queen recorded in her Journal: "The Jewels are truly magnificent. They had also belonged to Ranjit Singh and had been found in the treasury of Lahore. The very large pearls, 224 in number, strung in four rows are quite splendid and a very beautiful ornament.... I am very happy that the British Crown will possess these jewels for I shall certainly make them Crown Jewels." The same year, in Hyde Park London, it was displayed as a trophy at the Great Exhibition. It attracted great attention although it was considered to be so unskillfully cut that it looked little better than an ordinary crystal. Perhaps they knew that it was a legendary Koh-i-noor, that Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Punjab had made strenuous efforts to get into his hands

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and then never trusting it far from his own person. Rightly, the Koh-i-noor was obtained by the British through trickery and chicanery.

Cut to Size

The Koh-i-noor, in all, weighed 191[24] carats before it was removed to England.[25] Queen Victoria at the instance of Prince Albert, desired to recut it in the pattern of a regularly cut brilliant (a rose-cut shape) and, in 1852, the work of cutting was carried on by Messrs Garrards, who employed Voorsanger (a diamond-cutter, from M.Coster's atelier at Amsterdam) in London for 38 days. When complete, it reduced the diamond from 186-1\6 to only 106-1\6 carats. The cost of cutting and reshaping was estimated at £8,000. The operation was not approved by some experts who thought it to be a 'most ill-advised proceeding, which has deprived the stone of all its historic and mineralogical value....; others remarked that this 'entailed the greatest possible amount of waste ....and the whole operation was almost a total failure. It is futile to assess the exact value of this priceless diamond. 'Could Wafa Begam say positively?. "If a man were to throw stones on all sides with all his might and then threw one upwards the heaven, the jewels and gold thus amassed in the atmosphere indicated by the throwing of stones should constitute the price of the great diamond called Koh-i-noor. "Seeing the new shape, perhaps, Babar might not have struck to his earlier valuation of the diamond – equivalent to the price of one and a half day's food of the whole world.

Hobbouse cried for Justice

When the *Times* reported in July 1850 that Koh-i-noor had been brought to England and would be presented to Queen Victoria, John Sullivan of Brighter wrote to John Hobhouse[26], Indian Minister in the British Cabinet at that time, questioning the justice of confiscating the "dominions and diamonds" of Dalip Singh, the personal ward of the Governor-General, when the revolt was not against the English but against the Government run in the name of the minor prince.[27] The Hobbouse Papers contained fifty – page letter of John Sullivan, tearing to pieces the justification of Lord Dalhousie of his annexation of the territory as well as personal property of Dalip Singh, including the world's largest diamond. Sullivan, in his letter brought out the enormity of the Dalhousie hoax that Punjab territory and State property were taken over in part payment of the "debt" to the British Government and "of the expenses of the War". He pointed out that the territory was then worth around £ 2 million in annual revenue and the debt and the war expenses did not exceed that figure, and even if it was granted that the debt and the war expenses exceeded the annual revenue twice or thrice, the Governor-General had obtained "ample indemnity for the past and security for the future, "by seizing the territory and all state property." He asserted that since Dalhousie

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had failed to include Koh-i-noor as part of the "property of the State", the Governor-General had no right to compel his ward to surrender Koh-i-noor, his private property, to the Queen of England.

Again Presented to the Queen

In February 1850, Maharaja Dalip Singh was removed from Lahore to the old Fort of Fatehgarh, in Farrukhabad district of the present Uttar Pradesh, where he lived under Christian influence till 1854, he having embraced Christianity at the hands of Dr. Login, the Superintendent of his establishment. In April 1854, he was deported to England to spend the rest of his life there. He soon became a favourite of Queen Victoria and she wanted his portrait to be painted by the European painter, Winterhalter, which ultimately was hung in the gallery at Buckingham palace. The sittings took place at Backingham palace, and the Queen and prince Consort frequently visited the room arranged as a studio to see the progress of the work. Either Dr. Henry Login or Lady Login used to accompany the Sixteen year old Maharaja. The subject of the Koh-i-noor had never been touched upon in conversation in his presence since the arrival of Maharaja in England. The Logins knew that, to the Maharaja, the Koh-i-noor meant something beyond a mere jewel of fabulous value; in his eyes, and in the eyes of oriental nations, it was an object of superstitious veneration, as the symbol of imperial sovereignty over Hindustan, and the countries adjacent, marking its possessor as chief among the rulers of southern Asia.[28] Queen Victoria now wanted to know the sentiments of the Maharaja in the matter of Koh-i-noor, that was now the appropriated property of the British Crown. Lady Login wrote:

> "On one of these occasions, when the painter was engaged on the details of the jewels that Duleep Singh was wearing, Her Majesty took the opportunity to speak to me aside on the subject of the Koh-i-noor, which had only recently been returned to her out of the hands of the Amsterdam diamond-cutters, and, of course, was greatly changed in size, shape and lustre, she had not yet worn it in public, and, as she herself remarked, had a delicacy about doing so in the Maharaja's presence.
>
> "Tell me, Lady Login, does the Maharaja ever mention the Koh-i-noor? Does he seem to regret it, and would he like to see it again? Find out for me before the next sitting, and mind you, let me know exactly what he says:"

"Little did Her Majesty guess the perturbation into which her command threw a loyal subject. How thankful I was that the second query followed close on, and covered up the first, which would have been most embarrassing to answer truthfully, as there was no other subject that so filled the thoughts and conversation of the Maharajah, his relatives and dependents: For the confiscation of the jewel which to the oriental is the symbol of the sovereignty of India, rankled in his mind even more than the loss of his kingdom, and I dreaded what sentiments he might give vent to were the subject

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once reopened:

"The time passed, and no good opportunity arose of sounding him on the matter, till the very day before the next sitting was due, when, as we were riding together in Richmond Park, in desperation, I ventured to turn the conversation round to the altered appearance that the cutting was said to have given to the famous 'mountain of light', and remarked, as casually as I could, 'would he have any curiosity to see it now in its new form? 'Yes, in indeed I would. 'Yes, indeed I would. 'He affirmed emphatically: 'I would give a good deal to hold it again in my own hand'. This reply, knowing how keen were his feelings on the matter, startled me considerably, and it was in much trepidation that I asked the reason for this great desire on his part?' 'Why?' was his answer, 'Why because I was but a child, an infant, when forced to surrender it by treaty: but now that I am a man, I should like to have it in my power to place it myself in her hand'.

"I cannot tell you my delight and relief at his answer, and, lest he should add anything that might qualify or spoil such a charming and chivalrous sentiment, I hurriedly turned the conversation, and with a light heart awaited the morrow's interview with her Majesty.

"She came across to me at once on entering the room, the Maharajah being on the platform, posing for the artist, asking eagerly if I had executed her commands? and right glad I was to be able to give his answer. The Queen seemed as pleased as I had been at Duleep Singh's response to my question, and, signaling to the prince Consort, who was engaged in conversation with the painter at the other end of the room, they held a hurried consultation in whispers, dispatching one of the gentlemen-in-waiting with a message. For about half an hour they both remained, watching the progress of the portrait and conversing with those present, when a slight bustle near the door made me look in that direction, and behold, to my amazement, the gorgeous uniforms of a group of beef-eaters from the Tower, escorting an official bearing a small casket, which he presented to Her Majesty. This she opened hastily, and took therefrom a small object which still holding, she showed to the prince, and, both advancing together to the dais, the Queen cried out, "Maharaja, I have something to show you". Turning hastily – for, in the position he was in, his back was towards the actors in this little scene – Duleep Singh stepped hurriedly down to the floor, and, before he knew what was happening, found himself once more with the Koh-i-noor in his grasp, while the Queen was asking him 'if he thought it improved, and if he would have recognized it again?'.

"Truth to tell, at first sight, no one who had known it before would have done so, diminished to half its size, and thereby, in oriental eyes, reft of much of its association symbolism. That this was what he felt I am inwardly convinced; yet, as he walked with it towards the window, to examine it more closely, turning it hither and thither, to let the light upon its facets, and descanting upon its peculiarities and differences, and the skill of the diamond-cutter, for all his air of polite interest and curiosity, there was a passion of repressed emotion in his face, patent to one who knew him well, and evident, I think, to her Majesty, who watched him with sympathy not unmixed with anxiety – that I may truly say, it was to me one of the most excruciatingly uncomfortable quarters-of-an-hour

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that I ever passed: For an aweful terror seized me, lest I had unwittingly deceived Her Majesty as to his attentions seeing him stand the returning and turning that stone about in his hands, as if unable to part with it again, now he had it once more in his possession.' His eyes from the jewel, and – just as the tension on my side was near breaking – point, so that I was prepared for almost anything, even to seeing him, in a sudden fit of madness, fling the precious talisman out of the open window by which he stood: and the other spectators' nerves were equally on edge – he moved deliberately to where Her Majesty was standing, and, with a deferential reverence, placed in her hand the famous diamond, with the words: 'It is to me, Ma'am, the greatest pleasure thus to have the opportunity, as a loyal subject, of myself tendering to my Sovereign the Koh-i-noor'. Whereupon he quietly resumed his place on the dais, and the artist continued his work. "Of all those present on that memorable occasion, I believe that I am the sole survivor, for the late lady Ely, the Lady-in-waiting, was the only other lady there, and both Sir Charles Phipps and the equerry are dead. The officer and escort from the Tower had already left the room."[29]

Some English papers carried stories about this diamond and the misfortune it invariably brought to possessor, and Lord Dalhousie, who had personally brought this diamond from Lahore to Bombay and then sailed for England with this "Mountain of Light". If Her Majesty thinks it brings bad luck, let her give it back to me. I will take it and its ill-luck on speculation." But Queen Victoria was not mindful of any such omens attached to the great diamond. Yet; she was careful not to wear it in the presence of Dalip Singh, then living in London. Firstly, she started wearing it as a brooch or a bracelet and later on, it was mounted…. successively in the Crowns of Alexandra and Queen Mary. In 1937, the diamond was incorporated as the central stone in the State Crown made for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, Consort of George VI. Interestingly, no king of England had ever worn this fateful stone, although Edwards VII, George V and Grorge VI had occupied the throne of England between 1901 and 1936. Today, the diamond called by Nadir Shah as the "Mountain of Light", set in the British Queen Mother's Crown, 'smouldering with icy fire, and well protected by plate-glass, steel bars and a maze of electronic gadgets', is in display, along with other crown jewels, in an underground vault, in the Jewel House of the Tower of London, but only on payment of some charges.

Claims and Counter Claims

Maharaja Dalip Singh was of tender years – aged less than 11 years when he was forced to surrender the Koh-i-noor to the British Queen. He was removed to London and when he was some 16 or17 years of age, he was induced to 'Present' the same to the Queen, while he was invited in the Buckingham Palace on the pretext of obtaining his portrait by an artist. In 1861, the Maharaja was a grown-up man of about 23 years

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and his mother, Rani Jindan, then residing in England, reminded him of the Koh-i-noor and other articles, being his private property, in possession of the British Government in England. Dalip Singh, in those days, in private, always referred to Her Majesty as 'Mrs. Fagin'. "She's really a receiver of stolen property." He would remark, "She has no more right to that diamond than I have to Windsor Castle." Long back, after the Annexation of the Punjab, Dalip Singh was cognisant of the loss of this diamond. On September 4, 1849, on his birthday, Dr. Login tried to dress him most splendidly with several jewels, the diamond aigrette and star but when Login congratulated him on his appearance, Dalip Singh had innocently remarked that on his last birthday he had worn the Koh-i-noor on his arm. So it was too much for the deposed Maharaja to bear. He felt that, for confiscating the Koh-i-noor from him, the British forgot all measures of justice, morality and ethics they had earlier used to assess Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the foul play has been tried to be covered up by a fabrication that Dalip Singh had 'presented' the diamond to Queen Victoria who had accepted the same with 'reluctance'. Victoria forgot that the third clause of the Lahore Treaty dated March 29, 1849, clearly stipulated: "The gem called the Koh-i-Noor, which was taken from Shah Sooja-ool-moolk shall be surrendered by the Maharaja of Lahore to the Queen of England. In July 1861, the Maharaja wrote to Sir John Login, his former guardian, thus:

"My Dear Sir John,

.... I wish very much to have a conversation with you about my property in the Punjab and the Koh-i-noor diamond, and perhaps – if you really can come – you will kindly procure and bring with you the Punjab Blue Book...

Ever Yours

Duleep Singh"

A claim for the diamond was, therefore, made by Maharaja Dalip Singh himself as soon as he came of age. Login, having submitted Mr. Leith's legal opinion on the Maharaja's rights under the Treaty of Lahore (A Treaty on which the Maharaja, then less than 11 years old, was required to sign under duress) to colonel C.B. Phipps for perusal, received by following reply:

"Osborne Aug 4th, 1861.

My Dear Sir John,

My thanks for your letter..... The legal opinion may be perfectly correct one but these matters must be settled by the rules of common sense, and legal ingenuity on the other side. I feel sure that any equitable arrangement arrived at by honourable and impartial men, would be both better and more satisfactory than a constant state of contest and uncertainty. The arrival of the Maharanee in England is a misfortune, though it is impossible to oppose his filial wish. I hope

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he will see the inconvenience of having her and her attendants in the same house with him... ....

Ever Sincerely yours,
C. B. Phipps."

Sir John Login, was informed about this matter by a very high authority in 1861, which he recorded at the footnote on page 498, in *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* (1889) book:

"I do not know what the law in the native kingdoms of India may be, or what may have been established as the basis of International law in that country, but in this country there is no doubt that all property, either real or personal, inherited by the sovereign, from his or her predecessor, becomes the property of the Crown, and not of the individual. If the same law ruled in the Treaty with the Maharajah, all the private property would be absorbed in that of the State, except what Duleep Singh may have purchased himself, which could be but little.

"In the particular instance of the Koh-i-noor, although, it is now the personal property of the Queen having been acquired during her lifetime.... as soon as it came into the hands of her successor, it would become the property of the Crown, and could not be alienated.

"I do not think that it would be of any advantage to the Maharaja to advance claims that could be refuted, because it would necessarily lessen the prestige of the rest."

Thus, it was sought to be proved that, as the Koh-i-noor descended from Maharaja Ranjit Singh, through Maharaja Kharak Singh and Maharaja Sher Singh, to Maharaja Dalip Singh, it must have been considered state property, and dealt with as such by the Treaty of Lahore. The Maharaja died, without securing the 'Stone of Fate', in 1893.

Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, in 1976, wrote a personsl letter to the British Prime Minister, Mr. James Callaghan, in that year requesting for the 'return' of the Stone, as a demonstration of the Spirit that moved Britain to Shed its imperial encumberances. The British Prime Minister had to consult the Queen, Ellizabeth II, the descendant of Queen Victoria, before replying to the Pakistan Prime Minister. In the meantime, the matter caught the attention of the world press, and the Governments of India and Pakistan, the subjects besides. Really, the fabulous stone seemed to have become restive again, it having become a gem of contention, following Pakistan's recent demand for its return. Surjit Singh Majithia, former Union Deputy Defence Minister and President of Chief Khalsa Dewan, supported India's undisputed claim to the precious historic diamond, since the same was never sold to any one or offered as a gift. According to him, the Maharaja's possessions including his treasury, were held in the name of the Khalsa so much so that all treaties were signed and

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firmans issued in the name of the Khalsa. Evidently, he asserted that the Diamond also belonged to the Khalsa. Contesting the statement of the British Prime Minister, Callaghan, that it was presented to the British ruler of the period, he maintained, that Maharaja Dalip Singh, a minor, was removed to England and was made to 'present' the jewel to the Queen under duress. He also urged that the Khalsa is a living entity and is a part of India. The diamond should in all fairness be returned to India, the successor Government.[30] But a reader asked in the *London Times*: "If the Koh-i-noor is to be gouged out of the Crown of England and sent back home, where would it be sent?". To this another letter in the paper replied: "Sir, the answer's simple. It should be partitioned." But how? Sir Olaf Caroe, former Secretary in the External Affairs of pre-Indpendence Government of India and the last British Governor of NWFP (now in Pakistan) challenged, on September 9, 1976, Pakistan's claim to the Koh-i-noor, now in England, and said there were other claimants in the field. In a letter to the *Times*, he took pains to trace the history of the diamond, drawing on sources going back to the memoirs of the first Mughal Emperor, Babar. He pointed out: " The jewel was in Mughal possession in Delhi for 213 years, in Afghan possession, in Kandhar and Kabul for 66 years, in Sikh possession in Lahore for 36 years and in British possession for 127 years[31] "as the position stood in 1976 "...It was true that when adquired by the British it was at Lahore (now in Pakistan) but it is clear there are other claimants in this field. The Mughals in Delhi were of Turki origin and the rulers in Lahore when the stone came into British hands were Sikhs. The word 'return' is hardly applicable."

Hugh Tinker, in *The Times*, gave 'full marks' to Mr. Z.A. Bhutto for laying the claim of Pakistan first but, on examination, said that it did not seem pre-eminent. According to him, John Lawrence took the diamond from Maharaja Ranjit Singh's treasury, lost it and was saved acute embarrassment by his faithful bearer who had put it in a matchbox. "If Ranjit Singh's claim is considered good," then the Koh-i-noor ought to be returned to the Sikh State of Punjab in India... Mr. Natwar Singh, India's Deputy High Commissioner in England, said that the successor government of India and Pakistan was only a secessionist State, and any claim to legacies of properties, Jewels or records must be made to the Government of India or through the Government of India. Thus the claim of Pakistan was untenable. The Pakistan Ambassador, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, was asked by a British reporter, what would be the reaction if the British Goverrnment refused to part with the Koh-i-noor. He said: "It was not as if some territory was being claimed. It would be a gesture very much in keeping with British spirit." Pritam Saini from Sangrur, a reader wrote to the Editor, *The Tribune*, Chandigarh: "The Pakistan Ambassador in London, Mr. Mumtaz Daultana has correctly stated that his country does not claim the Koh-i-noor as a territory. In fact, it is not an

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immovable territory but had been changing hands and lands since centuries. It came to rest in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 'Toshakhana' until it was taken away to London by the British during the time of Maharaja Duleep Singh." Referring to the gesture of goodwill of the British Government, he added: "The sacred arms of Guru Gobind Singh acquired from the same place were given back to the Sikhs as the relics of their religious hero. Now why the Koh-i-noor taken way from the same place should not be handed over to the same people as the relic of their political hero, Maharaja Ranjit Singh?"

Times columnist George Hutchinson's statement that the Koh-i-noor "really belongs to Pakistan" was challenged by Mr. Stephen Garvin, in *The Times*' letters-to-editor column. He said that the gem was extracted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, from Shah Shuja, the deposed monarch of Afghanistan, in return for assistance in an attempt to regain his throne. Out of its many centuries of known history, the gem was located in Lahore for little over a decade. It came into the hands of Afghan rulers after the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739. But before that, it belonged to the Mughal Emperors, who took it from their Hindu predecessors. In early 14th Century, it belonged to the Raja of Malwa. Mr. Garvin added: "By what process of reasoning ought the Koh-i-noor now to be returned to the Government of Pakistan? Why not to the Sikhs, or to Afghanisatan, or the Government of India? ...To effect the return at this time of day what every possessor for centuries has held by right of conquest would be regarded by any of the recipients not as a grand gesture of magnanimity – we have come down too far in the world to carry that off – but as gratuitous and lacking in proper esteem." Writing in the *Guardian*, Mr. Michael Mcnay commented: "whoever owned the Koh-i-noor, it was said would rule the world. May be, that is why Bhutto wants it back." "But he immediately reminded him of the legend about Koh-i-noor. It brings bad luck to men."[32] Perhaps, the British Queen Elizabeth II, had correctly advised Callaghan not to deliver the gem, the finest diamond in the world to Pakistan.

Now again the demand for the return of the Koh-i-noor has been made by the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, as the same belonged to the Sikh Maharaja and was taken unceremoniously from the Lahore Treasury. Beant Singh Sandhanwalia, the last descendant of Chanda Singh, the brother of Naudh Singh who was the great-grand-father of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, has claimed the same as his personal property. More claims and counter claims are also being made. The once closed chapter in the turbulent history of the stone is thus again opened. In early 2000, British High Commissioner to India, Rob Young, ruled out the possibility of the Koh-i-noor diamond being returned to India. While inaugurating a library at the British Information office, at Chandigarh, he had categorically stated,

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"This question has been discussed so many times. I can only say that nothing is happening." A hope was revived recently for the return of the Koh-i-noor to the Sikhs when the treasure trove, known as the Lahore Darbar Jewels, was discovered in a Swiss Bank Vault in Zurich about the year 1997. The jewel box belonging to Catherine Duleep Singh, a daughter of Maharaja Dalip Singh, turned up in the list of 1872 'dormant' accounts reported to be held by Jewish victims of the Holocaust, since forty of the account holders, including Catherine Duleep Singh of Penn in Bucks, were from England. News of the safe deposit discovery led to a number of Sikhs claiming to be Maharaja Ranjit Singh's heirs and staking their right to the unclaimed treasure, with the hope that box may contain some documents proving whether the Koh-i-noor, like countless other treasures, was obtained by the Queen through trickery and chicanery.

– Avtar Singh Gill

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References

1. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Feb 13, 1977, p. 25.
2. *The Diamond is Forever* – Article by Gurmukh Singh Sandhu, published in *Sunday Tribune* dated July 9, 2000.
3. In the book, "*The Crown Jewels – Tower of London* (1986) pp. 25-26, it is recorded that it was almost certainly found in 1655 in the Kollar mines of Golconda.
4. *Akbar*, Vol 1.
5. *The Peacock Throne* (1973). (The Peacock Throne was a famous jewelled throne that was the seat of the Mughal emperors of India. It was commissioned in the early 17th century by emperor Shah Jahan and was located in the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audiences) in the Red Fort of Delhi. The original throne was subsequently captured and taken as a war trophy in 1739 by the Persian emperor Nadir Shah, and has been lost since. A replacement throne based on the original was commissioned afterwards and existed until the Indian Rebellion of 1857.)
6. Former Prime Minister of Sultan Abdula Qutab Shah (1611) of Golconda.
7. Syed Mohammad Latif, *History of the Punjab* 1964.
8. According to the *Crown Jewels* (1986), p 26, it was ground down disgracefully by a Venitian cutter, Horrensis Borio, and was only 280 carats when weighted by J B Travernier in 1665.
9. Some put this date as October 23, 1772.
10. *History of the Punjab* (Allen and Co.) Vol II (1883), republished 1970 by Language Deptt, Punjab, p. 12.
11. Ibid., p. 13
12. Ibid., p. 15
13. Ibid
14. The land of the Five Rivers and Sindh, (1882).
15. Lady Login, *Sir John Login And Duleep Singh*, pp 196-97.
16. Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir & Punjab*, pp. 303-04.
17. *The Court and Camp of Ranjeet Singh*(1840). He was Military Secretary to the Governor General, Lord Auakland.
18. *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh*, p 177.
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19. N. B. Sen writes that according to the Hindu Science of precious stones, every stone does not suit every possessor. A diamond may bring prosperity to one and misery and agony to others. The Koh-i-noor is traditionally supposed to bring good luck to a woman who bears it but ill-luck to a man.
20. E. Dalhousie Login, *Lady Login's Recollections*, p 76
21. Lady Login, *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh*, p. 224
22. *Lady Login's Recollection*, p 81.
23. *The Crown Jewels – Tower of London* (1986), p. 26 Original Weight "was some 787 carats".
24. It weighted 186 carats – the Crown Jewels (1986).
25. "At that time it was mounted with two other diamonds in the form of an upper arm bracelet and there are pictures of Ranjit Singh, the lion of the Punjab wearing it in the manner". The Crown Jewels, p 26.
26. President of Board of Control which guided the Government of India under the East India Company and held cabinet rank in the Government of Sir John Russel.
27. "*Rare Documents of Sikhs and Their Role in Punjab*", published by H S Bhatia Editor Civil and Military Law Journal.
28. *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh*, p. 340.
29. *Lady Login's Recollections*, pp 123-26.
30. *The Daily Tribune* dated September 28, 1976.
31. It is also said, that priceless jewel also remained in possession of Persians for 11 years, Nizam Shasi Dynasty of Ahmed Nagar and Qutab Shahi Dynasty of Golconda for 109 years – Gurmukh Singh Sandhu in article, This Diamond is Forever, Published in *Daily Tribune* dated July 9, 2000.
32. As the murky history of the diamond involves brothers blinding brothers, it is thought to be unlucky for a man to wear it. Consequently, it is placed in the Queen Consort's Crown – *The Crown Jewels*, p. 26.

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CONQUEST OF ATTOCK, BATTLE OF NAUSHEHRA AND OCCUPATION OF TRANS-INDUS AREA

Occupation of Attock

The monarchy in Afghanistan sank to anarchy. Zaman Shah was blinded and deposed and subsequently, Shah Shuja was deposed and he fled towards Kashmir. Later on, Shah Mohammad was also removed and all political powers were wrested by the Barakzai brothers. They were eighteen brothers and the eldest was Fateh Khan. Fateh Khan met Maharaja Ranjit Singh and they decided to conquer Kashmir jointly. One third of the spoil were promised to Lahore Darbar. The army of Afghans took control of Kashmir but forces of Lahore Darbar under Dewan Mohkam Chand got nothing except they were able to bring Shah Shuja to Lahore where his family had taken shelter. Begum of Shah Shuja had promised to give Koh-i-noor to Ranjit Singh. Koh-i-noor was brought from Kashmir. Ranjit Singh got Koh-i-noor diamond.

The political development in Kashmir alarmed Jehandad Khan, the governor of Attock. He offered the occupation of Attock to Ranjit Singh for a very nominal price. Attock was occupied by Ranjit Singh in 1813 AD. Attock had been considered as gateway to Peshawar, on one hand, and gateway to India, on the other. Its occupation by Ranjit Singh could not go uncontested. Fateh Khan sent Afghan army under Dost Mohammad, one of his brothers, to surround Attock and not to allow supplies to Attock fort by the Lahore Darbar. This was to oppose the army of Ranjit Singh. Dewan Mohkam Chand was sent from Lahore with the army and supplies for Attock. Hasan Abdal was made the base by the Lahore Darbar army and battle was fought in the plains of Chhuchh. Ranjit Singh's army won decisive victory in June-July 1813. This was the first successful campaign against Afghans. Had Afghans won, they would have recovered all the territories conquered by Ahmed Shah Abdali. This confirmed

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Ranjit Singh's occupation of Attock.

Battle of Naushehra- 1823 AD

It is estimated that Azim Khan who was *wazir* under Shah Mohammad was able to muster a strong army of more than 40,000 Afghans (Ghazis), who were prepared to lay down their lives. Ranjit Singh was aware of this eventuality and he himself reached Attock with his army. In the first round, he sent his troops to capture Khairabad across the Attock and the army returned with heavy losses. One strategy followed by Ranjit Singh was to divide the Ghazis. The Ghazis on the north of river Kabul were not allowed to meet the Ghazis on the southern side of the river. The forces of Lahore Darbar built first bridge across Indus which was smashed by Ghazis.

Ranjit Singh was struck and shaken by the hugeness of the army opposing him. He addressed the army like Nepoleon Bonaparte and said, "Khalsaji we have no option except to die or to win". The Lahore Darbar army was inspired and in the meantime, Akali Phula Singh with his band of desperados plunged into the battle and his entire contingent was killed. First he fought on horseback; when his horse was killed he continued his attack on elephant. Now Ranjit Singh decided to cross Attock after throwing a tray full of diamonds into the river and plunged his horse into it. Crossing the river on horseback has become a legend. The Afghans were defeated with great slaughter. This defeat rankled in the eyes of Azim Khan who had organized this *jehad*. He died of shock. Before his death, he called all his wives and asked them to give all their ornaments and jewels to his son to wipe off the disgrace of the defeat of his father.

The battle of Naushehra was very important in the career of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This enabled him to lead his forces to Peshawar. Echos of the cries of Khalsa were heard in the whole of the valley of Peshawar. But, Ranjit Singh was wise enough not to annex Peshawar because he wanted to consolidate his Trans-Indus possessions.

N.K. Sinha has rightly stated, "As the battle with Fateh Khan on the plains of Chhuchh decided the supremacy of the Sikhs eastward of Indus, this campaign established his power between that of river and Peshawar." J.B. Hasrat has given an apt description of the political situation after the battle of Naushehra in the following words:

> "The political confusion in Afghanistan had enabled the Sikhs to gradually take possession of Afghan provinces in northern India. The reduction of Peshawar as dependency of the Sikhs was a wise move. Kashmir had been occupied and Multan annexed. Since the death of Muhammad Azim Khan, the strong unifying hand of the Barakzai family, the glory and determination of the Afghan race as empire builders had departed. For sometime the provinces of Kabul, Kandhar and Peshawar had retained the semblance

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of a loose cohesion, but with the defection of the Peshawar Barakzais and their becoming the tributaries of the Sikhs, the unity of the Barakzai family as rulers of an empire was gone. However, the Peshawar Barakzais were not fully trusted by the Lahore Government, and nominal tribute was paid to the Sikhs under duress and threat of expulsion. For about 4 years, this unsatisfactory arrangement continued, when in 1827 all north was set ablaze with the cries of Jehad for the blood of the Sikhs."

– Dr. Kirpal Singh

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9

CONQUEST OF PESHAWAR AND ITS ANNEXATION

During the 19th century of Indian history, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839) was successful in tackling the Afghans who had ruled over Punjab for decades and rolled back the ever gushing tide of Afghan invasions.

Geography has played a major role in the history of civilizations and countries, and India has been no exception. The Himalayas in the north were impassable till late 20th century and the Indian Ocean denoted the limits of India in the south. The geo-political of north-west India was influenced by the nature of power across the Hindu-Kush range of mountains in the north-west. The region to the north Hindu-Kush all the way to Siberia has produced the Mongols and their strong invasions across Asia to the south-east into China, to the west towards Europe and to the south towards India through Hindu-Kush. The high mountain range covering a long distance rapidly descending into fertile plains on the north-west, but the terrain was such as to allow lightly armed mobile forces like cavalry to go through them and attack the plains. The communications in those days were slow, there would be little time for the further plainsmen to organize themselves for adequate defence.

When there existed a strong empire with military resources in north India it was secure from depredation of Afghans. Broadly speaking, there were two such powers. Ashoka ruled over the entire Afghan Country. After Ashoka, Kabul and Qandhar were ruled by Akbar, the Mughal Emperor. The decline of Mughal Empire set in when Aurangzeb ignored the Strategic Logic of the Sub-Continent and the north-west by pre-occupying himself almost totally for decades with his south Indian military campaigns.

In the 18th century, the Mughal empire was crumbling and the British empire was still busy with getting foothold in the east and south India. No power was holding Khyber Pass and it was inevitable that invasions from Afghanistan and beyond would

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start. By the end of 18th century, Afghans ruled Punjab, while Sikh power was rising and nominal Mughal ruler was the king of Delhi.

The year 1739 is a landmark in the history of north-west of India. It saw the beginning of fierce contest between different political powers to decide who was to rule over Punjab. Nadir Shah's invasion in 1738-39 shatterred Mughal Empire. He struck his coin at Lahore, plundered the Mughal capital and obliged the emperor to sign a document which made trans-Indus territories of Mughal Empire part of Persian Empire. The river Indus became the boundary between two empires. The revenues of four *parganas* of province of Lahore were to go to Nadir Shah.[1]

When Nadir Shah was returning from Delhi with wealth and riches of the Mughal capital, the Sikhs were bold enough to plunder the rear of his army. It annoyed Nadir Shah who enquired about these people. Zakaria Khan, the Punjab Governor told him about the Sikhs that they lived on the saddles of their horses. Nadir Shah asked the Punjab Governor to be more careful about the Sikhs. After the departure of Nadir Shah, Zakaria Khan took strong measures to suppress the Sikhs. Once again, military columns were sent to various villages to weed out Sikhs. Nobody was allowed to give shelter to them. Awards were fixed for those who captured Sikhs, or gave any information about them.[2]

In order to prevent Sikhs to visit Amritsar, Zakaria Khan appointed one Massa Rangarh of village Modiali at Amritsar. He erected four pillars at the four corners to keep strict watch on the movement of Sikhs. He took his seat at Darbar Sahib. Dancing girls gave performance of their art at the sacred shrine. Mehtab Singh Mirankot and Sukha Singh came in disguise and cut off Massa Rangarh's head and disappeared. The government retaliated by executing a number of Sikhs like Taru Singh, Subeg Singh and Shahbaz Singh, Bota Singh etc.[3]

Afghan Invasions

After the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, his ablest General Ahmad Shah Abdali succeeded him. He is considered to be the builder of Afghanistan. He turned out the Mughal governor of Kabul and captured Peshawar.[4] He had plan of building Afghan empire expanding upto areas west of river Jamuna. For this purpose, he made several invasions. The Mughal emperor, being weak, invited Marathas. When Ahmad Shah Abdali conquered Delhi, he appointed Najib as commander-in-chief of army. Najib was defeated by the Marathas.[5] In this way, the Marathas became a party contending for political ascendancy in the north-east of India.

In the political arena of mid 18th century Punjab, there were four powers at strife, of which the Sikhs were deemed to be the weakest. In the first round of this strife, the Mughals were face to face with the Afghans. The invasion by Nadir Shah

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(1737-39) had completely shattered the Mughal empire. And then, Ahmad Shah Abdali who invaded the Punjab repeatedly added the last back-breaking straw.

The First Invasion by Abdali 1748

In 1745, Zakaria Khan, the strong governor of the Punjab expired, which led to war of succession between his two sons, Yahya Khan and Shah Niwaz Khan. Yahya Khan was supported by Qamar-ud-din, who was Wazir in the Mughal Court in Delhi. Shah Niwaz Khan invited Ahmad Shah Abdali to attack the Punjab. Abdali already wanted to annexe some territories of the Punjab to his empire. So, he led his legions to Punjab. When Wazir Qamar-ud-din came to know of it, he along with myriad Mughal soldiers took a position at Manupur near Sirhind. In the battle of Manupur, Abdali was put to flight, but Qamar-ud-din was killed in the battle. As a result of this victory, Mir Mannu, the son of the Wazir Qamar-ud-din, was appointed the governor of the Punjab.[6]

The Second, the Third and the Fourth Invasions

This way the Sikhs were not a party during Ahmad Shah Abdali's first invasion. Abdali was defeated and he returned. To avenge this defeat he again invaded Punjab in 1750 and 1752. Mir Mannu, who had been appointed as governor accepted him as his superior and thus the territories of Punjab, Kashmir and Sindh became subservient to the Kabul kingdom. In this manner, the Sikhs also were deemed to be subordinate to the Afghans. In 1753, Mir Mannu died and his wife Mughlani Begum unable to control the situation invited Ahmad Shah Abdali. This was Abdali's fourth invasion. This time after conquering areas of Lahore, Sirhind, etc., Abdali went upto Delhi. He ransacked Delhi and annexed territories up to Sirhind into his empire. This was the time in 1757, when Taimur Shah and Jahan Khan desecrated Sri Darbar Sahib.[7] At this very time Baba Deep Singh came to Amritsar fighting the Afghans and embraced martyrdom. This battle has been described by Tahmas Khan, in his *Tahmas Namah*.[8]

The Fifth Invasion and Encounter with the Marathas

Ahmad Shah Abdali's first four attacks were devoted to annihilating the Mughal power in the northern India. In his fifth invasion, he had to face the Marathas in the third Battle of Panipat. When Ahmad Shah Abdali annexed Sirhind, Punjab, Multan, Sindh and Kashmir, Adeena Beg the faujdar of Jalandhar invited Marathas from Delhi. He invited the Sikhs to conquer Sirhind, because he knew that the Sikhs were ever-ready to invade Sirhind and, owing to the martyrdom of the younger Sahibzadas having taken place there, called it "Guru damned Sirhind" (*Guru mari Sirhind*). This way, the Sikhs and the Marhattas captured Sirhind and later on they overran Lahore.[9]

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The Abdali's rule in the Punjab thus came to an end. The Marhattas had their sway up to Attock and they appointed Adeena Beg the governor of the Punjab.

Ahmad Shah Abdali could not tolerate the seizing of the territory in the Punjab by Marhattas and, therefore, he again invaded India with a fuller force. This was the fifth invasion by him. The Marhattas also marched northwards from Deccan fully prepared. Abdali was commanding less troops, but by means of daring and superior military strategy, he carried the day against the Marhattas who fell in the Battle of Panipat.[10] Now, Abdali had one power in view, which he wanted to crush and it was the Sikhs.

The Sikhs had been offended by Afghans as they had destroyed Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. When Ahmad Shah Abdali's son Taimur Shah, and his General, Jahan Khan were returning to Kabul after ransacking Delhi, along with a lot of booty, the Sikh bands raided them, seized a good quantity of plundered goods and chased the Durrani forces over a sufficient distance. It happened in March 1757. Thereafter to wreak vengeance on the Sikhs, the Afghans attacked the town of Kartarpur (near Jalandhar) founded by Guru Arjan Sahib and set ablaze the Gurdwara Tham Sahib. On his way back from Delhi, Abdali halted at Lahore, wherefrom he sent his troops to Amritsar and desecrated Sri Darbar Sahib.[11]

Bloody Carnage of Sikhs (Wada Ghallughara) 1762 AD

In 1761, Ahmad Shah Abdali before leaving Lahore appointed Khwaja Ubaid the governor of Lahore and Khwaja Mirza Jaan the *faujdar* of Char Mahal (These *char* Mahals were Sialkot, Pasroor, Gujarat and Aurangabad). Mirza Jaan was killed while fighting the Sikhs, and, thereafter, Ahmad Shah sent Noor-ud-din to establish law and order in the Punjab. He was defeated by Charat Singh Sukerchakia and he retired to Sialkot. Hearing this, Khwaja Ubaid, who was the governor of Lahore gathered a large force and attacked Gujranwala, the capital city of the Sukarchakia Misl. Charat Singh called upon the other *misldars* including Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jai Singh Ghanayya and Hari Singh Bhangi to come to his aid. The assembled Sikhs put Khwaja Ubaid to flight and he fled to shelter inside the Lahore fort. The Sikh chiefs pursued him and conquerred Lahore. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia made Saadat Khan *faujdar* flee. This way the Sikhs carried the day everywhere. The Sikhs decided to set right Aaqil Das Niranjania of Jandiala as he had been spying upon the Sikhs and reporting to Abdali. When Niranjania came to know of it he called Ahmad Shah Abdali to his support.[12]

Abdul Karim, the author of Waquiyat Durrani writes: "Ahmad Shah Abdali was sleeping. Suddenly, he was shaken out of slumber on seeing a dreadful dream. Without informing anybody else, he took along a special force of three hundred soldiers who

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were on guard duty and set out towards India. While departing he sent a message to Shah Wali Khan telling him that he was going to India for a crusade (*jehad*) and urging the latter to join him soon with whatever forces be available." The minister using his own good sense issued some fifty or sixty commandments urging the military leaders to join the king alongwith troops because he had left for a *jehad*. Shah Wali Khan along with his troops joined the king and said to him, "In such a haste and without equipment your incursion into the enemy territory is not unattended by risks. Kindly unravel the mystery." In response the king said, "In a dream I met the divine prophet Hazrat Mohammad Sahib - May he be blessed - who said to me, "I have blessed you with kingship. Get up and leave for the Punjab, where at Jandiala the Sikhs are harassing the Musalmans. When I received this command, I did not want to make any delay in carrying it out."[13]

When Ahmad Shah reached Jandiala, he came to know that the Sikhs had left that place. Abdali stayed there for two days and learnt that the Sikhs had gone towards Sirhind and were troubling Zain Khan, the governor of Sirhind and Bhikhan Khan of Malerkotla. Abdali sent a horseman and assured Zain Khan and Bhikhan Khan that he was speedily coming to their help. Abdali reached near Malerkotla within two days and Zain Khan learnt that Ahmad Shah Abdali's forces had arrived.[14]

Ahmad Shah Abdali divided his forces into three sub-sections, the first under himself, the second under his minister Shah Wali Khan and the third under Jahan Khan. The troops under Shah Wali Khan were to make a detour and join the troops under Zain Khan. Abdali's and Jahan Khan's soldiers were to surround from the other sides. Thus the Sikhs were to be encircled from all sides. On the contrary, the Sikhs were so situated that about fifty thousand of them had assembled near the village Kup. Their baggage and about fifty thousand women and children accompanying them were at the village Guram which was six miles away from Kup. When Ahmad Shah Abdali reached Malerkotla, the Sikhs learnt of the Afghans' arrival. At once, the Sikhs advanced towards the village Guram. To checkmate them, Zain Khan who was the governor of Sirhind marched forward. In this encounter, Zain Khan's vanguard commanded by Qasim Khan was badly beaten and it had to retreat. In the meanwhile, the Durranis in large numbers and donning red uniforms reached there. They surrounded the Sikhs from all the four sides. They fought with arrows and swords, but the attack was sudden.[15]

Abdul Karim, the author of Waquiyat Durrani, writes that Ahmad Shah Abdali had sent the following message to Zain Khan, the governor of Sirhind: "Since our army includes personnel of Uzbek tribe, we have told them to kill anybody wearing Indian dress. So Zain Khan should order everyone in his army to wear leaves of trees or blades of grass on their heads, lest the Uzbek soldiers should kill them during the

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fighting taking them for enemy personnel."[16] Abdali passed orders to his own forces that anybody with leaves of a tree or blades of grass on his head might be regarded as Zain Khan's soldier. This incident shows that there was not much difference between the habiliments of the Sikhs and those of the Afghans which necessitated wearing of a mark of leaves on the head by the latter.

Military Strategy of the Sikhs

The Khalsa planned that four Sikhs should be sent to Garma with the instructions that the horde comprising children and women should head towards Barnala. Consequently, four Sikhs namely Sandhu Singh, Ala Singh, Sekhu Singh and Buddha Singh led the caravan.[17] But they had hardly covered a short distance when 8,000 Afghans under Shah Wali Khan assaulted them. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sent more Singhs as reinforcement and then the Sikhs combatted Afghans of Malerkotla and Zain Khan as has been described by Rattan Singh Bhangu:

> The caravan had gone two or three *kos* when the foes raided it.
> Zain Khan and Malerkotla Afghans rushed to kill them.
> Sham Singh said to the Khalsa
> That he would take care of Zain Khan and Malerkotla Afghans.
> And that you all attend to the remaining three sides considering it to be a crusade.[18]

The Sikhs were now fleeing as well as fighting and the Afghan forces were chasing them. As per Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, Abdali's forces were adept in the use of arms and the art of war. From the military viewpoint, the Sikhs had neither full scale of weapons nor tactical training which could stand them in good stead in face-to-face fighting. But they fought zealously and were ready to sacrifice their all in the name of the Guru. At last Sukerchakia Chief S. Charat Singh, grand father of Ranjit Singh said to them with a warning:

> "Listen to my suggestion. Just as the king has organised his troops, you also make misls to fight. Organise four gigantic misls and deploy two on either side. If a side is pressed hard, I shall come to its rescue."[19]

Rattan Singh has given a vivid description of the battle of Massive Massacre:

> Then two more hordes joined. Baland Khan and Zain Khan joined. They shook the Singhs in such a way as wind makes the leaves of the Peepal fly. They fought, fled and returned to fight. The Giljias were numerous and the Singhs could not be effective.

The Singhs fought intermittently and protected the caravan. Then, Ahmad Shah attacked from behind. Still, the Singhs kept fighting; intent on protecting them sometimes they stood and fought and sometimes they ran caravan away.[20]

In this battle, the Singhs fought and fled, and took possession of horses and weapons of the Afghans killed by them. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Charat Singh took an active part in this battle. Rattan Singh so showers praises on Charat Singh:

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Charat Singh's gun made him famous the world over. He could target the enemy from near as well as far off place.

While, the Singhs were fighting against the forces of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Zain Khan and Malerkotla, they halted enroute at a village named Gehl to refresh their breath but in vain. Next, there was another village named Qutba Bahmani. This village had a pond of water where first the Sikhs and then the Afghans quenched their thirst. In the way, there was nowhere water for men and horses. The Afghans had now got tired, fighting since early morning. Many of them had been killed also in this battle. So, Abdali did not deem it proper to pursue the Sikhs any further.[21]

Contemporary, semi contemporary and subsequent historians greatly differ on the number of Singhs martyred in this massacre. It is generally estimated that from ten to thirty thousand Sikhs embraced martyrdom in this massacre. But usually it is supposed that those who were martyred were about 20,000. Rattan Singh has mentioned them as 30,000.[22] The Sikhs deemed this critical time also as a trial by the Almighty. Just as gold gets purified in the crucible, in the same way the Khalsa assumed that the impurities had been washed away and the pure Khalsa had survived. Rattan Singh states:

"A Nihang roared and said aloud:
The pure Khalsa has survived and the impure been lost."[23]

This event is known in Sikh history as "Wada Ghallughara", the large-scale massacre of Sikhs.

Martyrdom of Baba Gurbakhsh Singh

Qazi Nur Mohammad who accompanied Ahmad Shah Abdali during his seventh invasion and called the Sikhs 'dogs' has given a vivid account of Baba Gurbakhsh Singh whose revered memorial (Shahid Ganj) is just behind Akal Takht, Amritsar. These thirty Singhs who challenged an army of thirty thousand Afghans[24] belonged to the Jatha of Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh of village Leehl near Khemkaran, district Tarn Taran. The names of three of them have survived, Man Singh, Basant Singh and Nihal Singh. The author of *Jangnamah* writes:

"When the Shah arrived at the Chak there was not a single Kafir to be seen. But a few of them had remained in an enclosure so that they might spill their own blood. And they sacrificed their lives for the sake of Guru. When they saw the renowned King and the army of Islam, they came out of the enclosure. They were only thirty in number. But they had not a grain of fear about them. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dream of death. Thus they grappled with the Ghazis and in this grappling they spilt their own blood. All the accursed Sikhs were killed and went to hell. The Islamis ran to the right and the left in search of them but they did not find even one of the impertinent dogs. The Shah had, therefore, to return to Lahore helplessly."[25]

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Ahmad Shah Abdali made several invasions to occupy and annex Punjab to Kabul kingdom. On every occasion, he was harassed by the Sikh bands. The Sikh warrior bands, called *Misl*, began to occupy territory at various places. They conquered Lahore in 1765 and struck coin in the name of the Gurus. The Inscription of the coin was the same, as that issued by Banda Singh Bahadur, viz:

> "By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds: The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons, and the victory is of Guru Gobind Singh, the king of kings."

The reverse had the following words in praise of his newly founded capital:

> "Struck in the city of peace, is illustrating the beauty of civic life, and the ornament of the blessed throne."

He also introduced an official seal for his state documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to his master:

> *Dego Tego Fateh Nusrat bedrang*
> *Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*
> [The kettle and the sword (symbols of charity and power), victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak - Guru Gobind Singh.

The same inscription continued uptill 1849 when the Punjab was annexed. Most of the Punjab was occupied by the Sikh *misaldars*.[26]

Ahmad Shah Abdali, the best horseman of his times in Asia, conqueror of Delhi, the age-old capital of the Mughals, the victor of the Battle of Panipat where he gave crushing defeat to Marhattas felt exhausted before the valiant Khalsa. He left Punjab and died in 1772.

A Tribute by Qazi Nur Mohammed

Out of contempt for the Sikhs, Qazi Nur Mohammed calls them '*sag*', which in Persian means dog, dog of hell, pig eaters, accursed infidels, etc. But he has paid the highest tribute to the character of Sikhs of eighteenth century. A bigoted writer who has got strong prejudice against Sikhs paying such glowing tribute to their character, is a matter of pride for the Sikhs. He writes:

> "Leaving aside their mode of fighting hear you another point in which they excel other fighting people.
> In no case they would slay a coward or put any obstacle in way of fugitive.
> They do not plunder the wealth and ornament of women, be she a well to do lady or maid servant.
> There is no adultery among the dogs nor are these mischievous people given the thieving.
> Whether a woman young or old they call her '*budhya*' (an old lady) and ask her to get out of the way. The word 'Budhya' in Indian lauguage means an old lady.

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There is no thief at all among these dogs nor is there any house breaker born amongst these miscreants."[27]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Afghans

As has been mentioned, there established twelve *misls* of Sikhs in Punjab during the last decades of eighteenth century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh belonged to Sukerchakia *misl* which was founded by his grandfather Charat Singh, who took leading part in Wada Ghallughara. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was able to unite all *misls* in the Trans-Sutlej area.

Since time immemorial, there had been innumerable invasions from the northwestern side. This ever gushing tide of invasions could not be stopped by any Indian. This was reserved for Maharaja Ranjit Singh, not only to stop this for ever but also to subjugate Afghans who had been invading India for the last eight hundred years. On the eve of rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there were several Afghan principalities. Adjacent to Lahore was that of Kasur and Multan held by Kheshgi Sadozai Afghans. Similarly, there were number of Afghan principalities like Dera Ghazi khan, Attock, Derajat, Peshawar, Kohat, Tonk, Bannu, etc. The Afghans were considered great warriors and it was not easy to conquer their territory especially when they considered Sikhs infidels (*kafirs*).

Jehad Against Sikhs and Conquest of Multan

After the occupation of Attock, Maharaja Ranjit Singh turned his attention towards Multan. It was led by Muzaffar Khan Sadozai Afghan. Several attempts were made, but every time *nazrana* was paid. In 1818, the force of Lahore Darbar decided to conquer Multan. The ruler of Multan also made huge preparations and declared *jehad* to defend the fort of Multan which was the strongest fort in this area. The siege of the fort continued for four months. Whenever breaches were made by Sikh cannons, the Jehadis immediately repaired the thick wall of the fort. On one such occasion, Akalis led by Sadhu Singh pushed themselves in the fort followed by army. Jehadis most valiantly fought. There was fight in the streets and bazaars. Ultimately, Ranjit Singh's army was victorious and Multan was annexed to Lahore Kingdom.[31]

Griffin describes the final scene:

"Here the old Nawab with his eight sons and all that remained of his garrison stood sword in hand resolved to fight to death. There died the white bearded Muzaffar Khan scorning to accept quarter died with five of his sons. The sixth was wounded severely in the face and two accepted quarter and were saved. Few of the garrison escaped with their lives and the whole city was given to plunder."[32]

Occupation of Kashmir - 1819 AD

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Maharaja made several attempts to conquer Kashmir after his fiasco in 1812. His invasion of Kashmir in 1814 was a complete disaster as Azim Khan Barakzai, governor of Kashmir defeated the invading army. In 1819 AD. Fateh Mohammad, Azim Khan's eldest brother was killed in the family feud and Azim Khan rushed to Kabul with his chosen force and appointed Jabbar Khan in his place. One of his ministers deserted his master and took asylum with Ranjit Singh and disclosed him that the best army had been taken to Kabul and he could conquer Kashmir. Ranjit Singh ordered preparations to invade Kashmir. The first wing advanced from Pir Panjaal, the second by Rajauri and third via Bhimber. Ranjit Singh advanced by Rajauri route. Kashmir was conquered and annexed to Lahore Darbar. Forts in the surrounding areas were occupied.[33]

Jabbar Khan, deputy of Azim Khan could not face the Lahore Darbar army and was routed with his 12,000 soldiers. Kashmir was annexed to the Lahore kingdom to the great chagrin of Azim Khan who had taken the leadership of Barakzai brothers. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's aggressive policy of conquest of Multan and Kashmir did not stop there. His army conquered the Trans-Indus areas of Mankera, Pakhli, Damtaur, and Darband.[34] This greatly enraged Azim Khan who was all powerful in Kabul after the murder of his eldest brother Fateh Khan. He assumed the title of Mir-ul-Mommin and declared Jehad against Sikhs. Azim Khan was able to collect a huge army of Afghans who had tied coffins on the heads, gathered near Naushehra with the loud cries of *Loha Gaza* (Great *Jehad*).

Occupation of Peshawar

According to *Ain-i-Akbari*, all Trans-Indus areas including Peshawar were part of Kabul province. Peshawar has been under Kabul's rule for centuries.

Seeing political convulsion in Afghanistan, Maharaja Ranjit Singh crossed Indus after the conquest of Multan in 1818 AD. Next, he entered into the Peshawar valley and occupied Peshawar. It was given to Jahandad Khan who had helped Ranjit Singh to occupy Attock fort. He was to pay nominal tribute. It was for the first time after about eight hundred years that some Indian ruler occupied Peshawar. Soon after Ranjit Singh took measures to wipe out small dependencies of Deabanb and Mankera (1821) Deaband and Tonk with those surrounding areas.[35]

Kashmir had already been conquered and annexed in 1819 AD. All these factors contributed to the armed conflict which is known as Battle of Naushehra, the account of which has already been given.

After the victory at Battle of Naushehra, Ranjit Singh again occupied Peshawar but did not annex it because he wanted to consolidate his hold on the surrounding areas.

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Syed Ahmad's Jehad Against the Sikhs

Syed Ahmad, born in Bareilly, served in the army of Amir Khan Rohilla and later on deserted him. He visited Mecca and, on his return, declared himself Khalifa. He started preaching hatred against the Sikhs. He collected turbulent Yusafzai tribes and proclaimed *jehad* against the Sikhs. In 1827, he moved from Panjtar with his levies and fell upon Akora. Here, he had to face a strong Sikh force under Budh Singh Sandhanwalia who repulsed him. A large number of his followers were killed in the battle which was fought at Saido. Budh Singh Sandhanwalia was also killed in this battle. Syed Ahmad retired to the hills again. He was able to recapture Peshawar from Yar Mohammad Khan, but the timely arrival of Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura saved the situation. Later on, in the battle of Balakot where Syed Ahmad had to face Kanwar Sher Singh, who overtook him and Syed Ahmad was killed in action in Kay 1831 AD.[36]

Alexander Gardner has described how Khalifa was killed in the action in his memoirs in the following words:

> "Syed Ahmad and the Maulvi surrounded by his surviving Indian followers were fighting desperately hand to hand with the equally fanatical Akalis of Sikh army. They had been taken by surprise and isolated from the main body of the Syed's forces which fought badly without leader. Even as I caught sight of Syed and Maulvi they fell pierced by a hundred weapons. Those around them were slain to a man. I saw literally within a few hundred yards of the Syed when he fell but I did not see the angels descent and carry him off to paradise."[37]

Annexation of Peshawar in 1834 AD

After final liquidation of Syed Ahmad, Maharaja Ranjit Singh annexed Peshawar in 1834 A.D. This had a great effect on Barakzais as they had been deprived of their possession. Ranjit Singh's advance was a menace to the Mohammadan tribe. The political, religious sentiment and instinct for self preservation impelled the Barakzais chief Dost Mohammad to make a grand effort to recover Peshawar. Therefore, he took the title of Amir-ul-Mommin and declared Jehad against the 'infidel' Sikhs. Dost Mohammad was able to collect more than forty thousand troops besides innumerable voluntary Ghazis. He was able to acquire 37 guns with 700 rounds each. Large supplies of grain were also collected.[38]

Bloodless Victory for Ranjit Singh

It was a great crisis in history. Had Ranjit Singh been defeated he would have been driven across Indus. Here Ranjit Singh wanted to gain time to concentrate his army to measure strength with the Afghans. He deputed his courtiers Faqir Azia-ud-

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din and Harlan, an American Infantry officer, to negotiate with Dost Mohammad. Faqir Aziz-ud-din and Harlan, were able to convince Sultan Mohammad, brother of Dost Mohammad, that he would be given *jagir* consisting of Kohat, Tonk and Bannu. Consequently, Sultan Mohammad defected and separated his army from the *jehadis*. This had a very disheartening effect on Dost Mohammad and his allies. Both the armies - *jehadis* and Lahore Darbar forces faced each other for seventeen days. Soon, after the defection of Sultan Mohammad, the Jehadis retired without firing a shot. They took with them all ammunition, etc. This was bloodless victory for Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[39]

Subjugation of Afghan Turbulent Tribes

The rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1839) will ever remain a watershed in the annals of the trans-Indus regions, especially Peshawar, Bannu as well as Hazara. All these areas along with Kashmir were a part of Afghanistan. Olaf Caroe writes, "Ranjit Singh had wrested from Afghan their fairest provinces not only those east of Indus where Kabul rulers could claim no racial affinity, but Peshawar itself and Bannu, fertile gardens inhabited by proud people of Afghan and Pathan stock."[40] Maharaja Ranjit Singh undertook strong measures to subdue and control the ferocious tribes of north-western frontier. These tribes had not ever been subjugated and brought under control.

Gazetteer writes: "The Mughal sway was more nominal than real. They appear to have been content to levy revenue and there is nothing to show any serious government was attempted. The whole district paid only half of a *lac* of rupees and heads of each tribe were practically independent."[41] Hari Singh Nalwa who has been described as "an ideal Sikh soldier" by Olaf Caroe[42] was appointed as Governor of Peshawar in 1834. All these trans-Indus areas were never under any regular administration, as it has been rightly stated by Olaf Caroe that "territorial link of administration has to be traced to its beginnings in the Sikh occupation of Peshawar."[43] Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his General Hari Singh Nalwa dealt with the north-western frontier tribes in two phases dividing it into sectors viz; (1) Hazara sector and (2) Peshawar sector.

Role of Hari Singh Nalwa

Hazara, the country, west of Kashmir, east of Peshawar and north-west of Attock was conquered and annexed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1820. Its first Nazim under Ranjit Singh was Amar Singh Majithia who ruled over the territory for two years. He was successful in suppressing the rebellion of Muhammad Khan Tarin and was able to defeat Dhund, Tarin, Tanol and Kharal tribes who were fighting against him. The

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battle was over, the enemy had taken to flight and the Sikh forces had retired from the field. When Amar Singh, thirsty and fatigued, went down to the little stream Samandar to bathe, he had only a few horsemen with him and a number of the enemy returning and seeing the weakness of the little party came down and killed Amar Singh and his followers after a desperate defence.[44] After the death of Amar Singh Majithia, Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed the Nazim of Hazara. He was not unknown to the Hazara tribes. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh led the army to conquer Mankera in 1821, he ordered Hari Singh Nalwa, who was in Kashmir to join him there. At that time Hari Singh Nalwa had only seven thousand armymen. On the way, he was opposed by twenty thousand wild mountaineers living in the Pakhly hills. Pakhly or Hazara was the spot dreaded by merchants for these tribes demanded toll on the merchandise. Hari Singh, after his vain efforts to induce the enemy to yield him a passage, attacked them with vigour and storming their stockade defeated them with great slaughter.[45] This was no mean achievement to defeat about the twenty thousand Hazara tribes with seven thousand men. Maharaja was much pleased over this exploit of Hari Singh Nalwa. This incident indicated how precarious were the conditions. N.K. Sinha has rightly stated that "Pakhly, Damtaur, Torbela and Deaband region Sikh sway was still precarious."[46] Hari Singh Nalwa was at his right time to be sent there to create a tradition of vigorous and efficient administration. "Hazara was the most turbulent province under the Sikh rule."[47]

In order to understand the measures of Hari Singh Nalwa, it is essential to understand the geographical condition of this region as well as tribal distribution. Hasham Khan belonged to the northern area and was the leader of Kral tribe (or Karlani tribe which is a branch of Khattak tribe). In order to have full control over the area, Hari Singh Nalwa built a fort at Nara, modern Tehsil Abbotabad.[48] Army was stationed there to keep in check the Pathans on this side.

On the western side of Hazara territory, the river Indus forms the natural defence but the north and eastern side was bounded partly by river Jhelum and partly by the mountainous range known as Pakhly range. In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the entire territory is known as Pakhly.[49] Pakhly appears to have derived from Pactyam nation mentioned by Herodotus.[50]

According to Ibbetson , the following tribes chiefly occupied the Hazara territory: Deilzak, Swati, Jadun, Tanaoli and Shilamani.[51] In the lower range, according to Prem Singh, the main Pathan tribes were Tarin, Utmanzai, Tarkholi.[52] In order to check these ferocious tribes, Hari Singh Nalwa adopted suitable measures to control them. He built a very strong fort in the valley surrounded by mountains and named it after the eighth Guru of the Sikhs as Harkrishangarh and also founded a town named Haripur. The town was surrounded by a wall which was four yards thick and sixteen

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yards high and had four gates. Well was dug to carry water into the streets of the town. Baron Hugal visited the town on December 23, 1835 and he found the town humming with activity.[53]

In the upper ranges of Pakhli there lived mainly Jadun, Tanawali and Swatis.[54] Hari Singh built forts at strategic places and garrisoned them with army. The roads were built to link them, so that reinforcement could be sent from one fort to another fort at the time of crisis. The forts built in the upper ranges of Pakhly were: Fort Nowan Shehar, Fort Dhamtaur, Fort Darband and Fort Shinkiari.[55] Old fort at Tarbela was repaired.

Tribes in Peshawar Sector

When Peshawar was conquered and annexed, Hari Signh Nalwa was appointed its Governor in 1834.[56] It was very important to understand the tribal distribution in the Peshawar region. Khattaks predominantly settled in Khattak, country from the south of Kabul river on the lowlands from Indus to Naushehra. They were fanatical people and never liked the Sikhs. Yusafzais were the largest of the Peshawar tribes. They were extremely warlike. Muhammadzai inhabited the area north-east of Peshawar. The Girgianis had their settlements south of Muhammadzai areas and they were in open rebellion as their lands had been given to Barakzai chiefs under the Sikh Government. Afridis ruled supreme in the *Khaibar* area. Besides these, there were tribes like Khalils, Mohammads[57] etc. The tribesman in each *khel* looked to his own Malik or Khan or council of elders, viz., *jirga* for guidance in matters of common interest and not to the ruling authority at Peshawar. As such, he was ever ready to take up arms when called upon by the chief against the Sikhs.

Hari Singh Nalwa knew how to match his ferosity towards Afghans against their hatred of Sikhs. He set up a very strong administration in the Peshawar valley. He levied a cess of Rupee four per house on the Yusafzais. This cess was to be collected in cash or in kind. For its realization, personal household property could be appropriated. There was scarcely a village which was not burnt. In such awe, were his visitations held that his name was used by mothers as a term of a fright to hush their unruly children.[58]

It was prudently realized that although the spell of Afghan supremacy was broken, the region predominantly populated by turbulent and warlike Muhammadan tribes could not be securely held unless a large army was permanently stationed there. A force of twelve thousand was with Hari Singh Nalwa to quell any sign of turbulence. Khalsa resounded in the valley. Part of the city of Peshawar was burnt and the residence of the Barakzai governors at Bala Hissar was razed to the ground. Hari Singh Nalwa strengthened the Sikh position by garrisoning the frontier forts.

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Administrative Measures Adopted

In order to subjugate north-western frontier tribes, Hari Singh Nalwa examined the topography of the Peshawar region. There were three rivers flowing from Afghanistan to Peshawar forming three water routes as well as land routes as has always been the case in the hilly area. The highest tributary of the river Indus on the western side was the river Indus on the other side was the river Kabul. Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and Jalalabad, a very important town between Kabul and Peshawar, have been situated on the banks of this river. Naushehra, where a decisive battle was fought in 1823 between the Afghan and the Sikhs was also situated on the bank of this river. The second important Barha river was a tributary of river Kabul and joined it from the southern side. Peshawar, the capital of the region was situated on it. The Swat river, which was tributary of river Kabul, joined it from the north. Hari Singh Nalwa decided to build forts in order to check infiltration of and the invasion of the Afghans on all these routes. The nearest mountainous pass to Peshawar was Khyber pass, which was only nine miles from Peshawar. On previous occasions, all important invaders had made invasions on India through it. Hari Singh Nalwa had decided to construct forts on all these strategic points. On the bank of river Kabul,[59] Michni fort was constructed and it was put under the command of Nachhater Singh, son of a well known General Dhanna Singh Malwai. In this fort were stationed 300 infantry men, 100 horsemen, 10 artillery men, 2 big and 2 small cannons.[60] On the bank of river Barha, a strong fort was built named Barha Fort, where 300 infantry, 100 cavalry, 3 cannons were placed and suitable provisions were supplied. It was placed under Jhanda Singh Butalia. On the Swat river side, there was a strategic place where three routes met. These three routes were – one from Kabul, another from Hashatnagar, which was an Afghan settlement on the extreme north, and the third was Gandhav Pass, which was a minor Pass. Hari Singh constructed a fort here. It was named as Shankargarh. There were stationed 500 infantry, 300 cavalry, 35 artillery men, 2 big and 10 small cannons. It was placed under Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia who was a very well known warrior.[61] But the most important route was the Khyber Pass which had been the traditional route for the invaders since time immemorial.

After surveying the entire area, Hari Singh found a small mound on the eastern end of Khyber Pass. It was in the nearby village named Jamrud. It had a very small mud fort. Hari Singh decided to build a fort there. Necessary material was collected and a foundation of a very strong fort was laid there on 17th Oct, 1836.[62] According to Prem Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa himself laid the foundation of that fort after prayers. The masons and the labourers were working there continuously and they were able to finish this historic fort after a month and twenty-five days. Its walls were 4 yards wide, 12 yards high. It was named Fatehgarh Sahib. There were stationed 800 infantry,

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200 cavalry, 80 artillery men, 10 big cannons and 12 small cannons. Maha Singh, a very tried General was appointed the commander of the fort. In the fort Jamrud, there was scarcity of water. There was a little stream which flowed in the Khaibar Pass itself and it was under the control of the Afridis. In order to have constant flow of water in the fort, the Afridis were given a *jagir* worth Rs. 1,200/-. An alternate arrangement of water was also made in the fort in case this flow of water was stopped. A very big well was dug in the fort to supply water if Afridis stopped the water.[63]

Another important fort was built on the road leading to this fort linking Peshawar. It was just in the middle of the way between Jamrud and Peshawar. It was named Burj Hari Singh and 100 men were stationed there. It was comparatively a small fort.[64]

Besides this, Hari Singh got repaired the old forts like Attock, Khairabad, Shubkadar and Jehangira. The line of forts on the north-western side was linked by roads so that reinforcement could reach there in time of crisis. Peshawar was strongly fortified and it was linked with Attock by a line of towers, erected at the distance of two *kos*.[65]

All these measures alarmed the Afghans in Afghanistan, especially Dost Mohammad, the Barakzai Chief of Kabul. The Afghans apprehended that their dangerous neighbours would make an inroad beyond the formidable defile. They, therefore, resolved to put a stop to any further advance of Sikhs into the tribal areas. A force of 8,000 strong with 50 cannons under Akbar Khan and Abdul Samad Khan proceeded towards the Khaibar to dislodge Sikhs from Jamrud and swelled their ranks to 20,000 horse and foot. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed in the battle of Jamrud fighting most valiantly in 1837. Thus ended the life of a great General who had become terror to Afghans and subdued the turbulent tribes of north-western frontier.[66]

The Afghans had been invading India for a number of centuries (1001-1798). They had never seen a defeat at the hands of Indians whom they considered *kafirs* and whom they contemptuously called "Hindku". For the first time ,in their history, they were decisively defeated at the Battle of Balakot of Naushehra (1823), Battle of Saido (1827) and Battle of Balakot (1831) by Sikhs whom they considered '*kafir*'. Now they were bewildered and confused and began to say "*Khalsa ham Khuda Shuda*" (Khalsa too has become believer of God).

– Dr. Kirpal Singh

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH & THE ROLL BACK OF THE AFGHAN EMPIRE: GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGY AND IMPACT

As the Moghul Empire weakened and began to dissolve by the early 18th century, Afghanistan started to assume for the first time in history its contemporary form as a country. By the second half of that century, Afghanistan emerged as a budding empire spreading west (into Persia) and south-east (into India). The area west of Yamuna River started to pay tribute to Afghan rulers of Afghanistan. The rise of the Khalsa started to challenge this empire; but the various groups formed into *misls* remained divided and hence could not bring to bear the full weight of their power in dealing with the Afghan Empire. Maharaja Ranjit Singh not only brought all the Sikh chieftains under a united flag and his leadership as the ruler of Punjab, but more important, he rolled back Afghan power northward to the mountain regions, and established his border at the mouth of the Khyber Pass which had formed the historical gateway for invasion from the stark life of Afghanistan-Central Asia into the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains.

The boundary established by Ranjit Singh has lasted now for nearly two centuries. The border was well defended with new forts constructed under him at strategic locations which could provide mutual support. More important, Ranjit Singh sought to diplomatically work for a friendly ruler in Kabul without seeking direct control or direct military involvement. Thus, when the British decided to install a ruler in Kabul by the force of arms, Ranjit Singh accepted the Tripartite Treaty, but ensured that the British invasion force would not route through his territories. He was conscious of, and deeply interested in, the developments well beyond Afghanistan and tried to maximise his options in the context of rivalries between the great powers (between Napoleon's France, Britain and the Czarist Russia), which continued to play the Great

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Game. Imperial Britain, soon to emerge as the sole super power of the times, after a few disastrous attempts to impose direct control over Kabul, finally settled down to the strategy set in place by Ranjit Singh and retained the border established by him. It also settled down to the benign diplomacy in its relations with Afghanistan.

In the last quarter of the 20th century Pakistan, which occupies the region which constituted Ranjit Singh's kingdom but with the additional assets of Sindh and Baluchistan, and less the state of Jammu & Kashmir (except for the area occupied by it by force) started a policy of trying to exercise direct control over Kabul, something that no middle power of this size and capability has ever before succeeded in. It evolved concepts like "strategic depth" to rationalise its goal of exercising control over Aghanistan and exploited religion for *jehad* besides fully involving itself in super power rivalry to justify its narrower aims. What resulted was that Pakistan-Aghanistan evolved as the epicentre of global terrorism including the depredations in India not unlike those reminiscent of the historical raids of the earlier centuries. The United States war against terrorism has finally dismantled the second regime installed in Kabul by Pakistan army, the second one receiving even greater support than the first attempt.

Historical Overview

History tells us that, besides the waves of migrations from the Central Asian regions into the sub-continent, threat to India's security and sovereignty inevitably arose from the northwest of the sub-continent. History books are replete with details of repetitive invasions by adventurous groups from across the Khyber Pass in Aghanistan. Mongol, Turki, Persian and finally the Afghan themselves descended the plains of Punjab often invited by kings in India to fight against their rivals here. Most of those who stayed behind to rule, intermarry and become "Indian" did reach up to Delhi and sat on its throne while others (including Alexander and the Greeks) remained limited to the Punjab. More often than not, religion was not a factor binding native monarchs to each other or among the invaders and the local kings, and core incentive for the shifting alliances (often during a battle itself) came from the more material motivation to protect their regal interests or expand them. In most ways, the nature of these shifting alliances and wars against erstwhile allies simply reflected (and affected) the rise and fall of the fortunes of the monarchies. But we would make a grave error if we were to judge those monarchies and "nationalism" by the standards of today. From times immemorial, there has been a civilisational cultural unity of the region south of the Himalayas which denotes India. But the concept of the nation-state with defined territorial limits and sovereignty as the symbols of nationalism did not exist anywhere in the world till the Peace of Westphalia in 17th century started to

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shape the modem nation state in West Europe.

But unlike the Chinese, who built the Great Wall to provide the defence line, no such effort was made by the Indians. The major reason may lie not only in the different cultural approaches but also in the fact that Beijing, the historical centre of power in China, is only a short distance from the foothills. In India, on the other hand, the main centre of power, which was Patliputra in ancient days shifted to Delhi, a good 600-kilometre march from the foothills of the Northwest. The rivers of Punjab did provide natural obstacles to the invaders, especially when they were defended. And, hence, so many of the historical battles starting from that of Alexander and Porus in 3rd century BC were fought on the banks of these rivers. Often, of course, the invaders had opted for the southern routes coming through the Bolan Pass (instead of Khyber) or along the eastern bank of the Indus River to cross over at Multan or south of it and then march across easier terrain. It is not, therefore, difficult to understand why Lahore acquired the strategic importance that it did from times immemorial.

There were many periods in history when the Indo-Gangetic plains were secure from invasions and depredations from Mghanistan and beyond. This was essentially when a strong empire with military and economic resources of the country existed in north India. There are two broad periods when this happened: the Maurya and the Moghul Empires. The 3rd century B.C. Asoka's Empire is one of the early examples when Kabul and Kandhar were kept under its rule and domination. The Kushans continued to rule the trans-Khyber region in the 2nd century. The next period when Kabul and Kandhar were ruled by monarchs from the Indo-Gangetic plains was the early Moghuls from Akbar's reign up to at least the beginning of the 18th century after which the Moghul Empire started to dissipate.

It is really by the 7th century AD that we witness the retreat of Indian empires from this strategically important region; and by the 11th century the strategic control had reversed with the tribal leader Mahmud of Ghazni (in Afghanistan) controlling the plains of Punjab after repeated forays across the Khyber. Successor rulers went further to make Delhi as the seat of power. In that sense, they became Indian and protected themselves from their kinsmen and other adventurers across the Khyber by holding defensive frontiers at Khyber or Kabul depending upon their own resources but well west of the Indus River. Akbar's Mughal Empire expanded control over Kabul and Kandhar and maintained it for nearly two centuries giving rise to another "golden period" not very different from the Renaissance in Europe. But the decline of the Mughal Empire started with the loosening of control over the gateways to India when Aurangzeb ignored the strategic logic of the sub-continent and the Northwest by preoccupying himself almost totally for decades with his South Indian military campaigns.

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These were perhaps the only periods (spanning many) that the sub-continent was safe from invasions through Afghanistan till Ranjit Singh became the king of Punjab in 1799.

When a strong empire did not exist in north India controlling the plains of Punjab to keep up a forward strategic posture across the Khyber Pass and the Bolan Pass further south, one of the two situations emerged. Either the chieftains from Afghanistan and beyond raided the plains of Punjab or went on to establish their rule at Delhi to finally play out the strategic scenario of holding the North-western border at Khyber or Kabul. Middle powers like the Lodhi and the Slave Sultanates ruling Delhi after the 12th century did not possess the strategic military-economic resources to keep their strategic frontiers along Kabul-Kandhar axis. They opted for holding a defensive frontier at the Khyber Pass west of Peshawar dominating the Indus valley. In the 18th century the Moghul Empire was crumbling and the British Empire was still busy with getting a foothold in east and south India. No power was holding Khyber and it was inevitable that invasions from Afghanistan and beyond would start again. By the end of 19th century, Afghans ruled Punjab while Sikh power was rising and a nominal Moghul ruler was king of Delhi.

Afghanistan in Strategic Context

With a large number of tribes living in the inhospitable (but beautiful in the few valleys) mountain territory of what today is called Afghanistan, the country emerged as an entity in its present form only around the beginning of the 18th century. The territory lies at the crossroad of a number of civilisations (nomadic, agrarian and herdsmen), cultures, empires, migration routes, trade and commerce (although its importance reduced after 16th century penetration of the Indian Ocean by European powers and increasingly trade started being carried out across the seas), and empires. Mghanistan's strategic importance, far beyond any apparent reason, has rested in its geography as the link territory of the Asian landmass. In purely political terms, it places Afghanistan at par with immediate neighbours. From the Indian perspective, Afghan tribal leaders themselves also made forays into India to loot and plunder. But these were mostly independent of any territorial allegiance to Afghanistan. Afghan rule itself was pushed deeper into the sub-continent when the Mughals invaded India in the 16th century. Over the centuries, however, the territory of Afghanistan served to provide the invasion routes into India by Turki-Central Asians.[1] The only period when these invasions did not take place was when a north-Indian power controlled the Afghanistan glacis and the access routes through it, in particular, the key Khyber Pass.

For more than three millennia, Afghanistan has been the strategic frontier of

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India. It is not intended to go over the history of invasions of India from the Northwest. Terrain dictated strategy through the centuries. Khyber Pass held the key and, due to its unique terrain passage through it, was not possible without controlling the mountainous territory around it.[2] In turn that required control over Jalalabad which could not be held without control over Kabul (as the British were to find at great cost in the First Afghan War). On the other hand, the Khyber Pass provided a vital defensive position especially after the fort at Jamrud was built. But it is essential to note that, once the invader had come through the Khyber Pass, there was little to oppose him (except an opposing army), till he would get to a natural obstacle like the rivers of Punjab or a seat of power. The military force that would advance through the Hindukush and squeeze through the Khyber Pass of necessity had to possess high mobility and carry minimum baggage. Without advance information it would have been impossible for the rulers of Delhi to march out hundreds of kilometres to stop the much more mobile invader after he came through the Khyber Pass. This lies at the root of the fact that crucial battles for India have almost compulsively been fought at Panipat where the full weight of Delhi's power could be applied at the battlefield, a day's march by horse from the stronghold of Delhi. This, coupled with the defensive-reactive culture of Indian statehood, also gave rise to what has been termed as the "Panipat Syndrome" in Indian security culture where no advance planning is undertaken and nor is forward defence understood in military-strategic terms. On the other hand, geography and terrain dictates that if the Indo-Gangetic plains have to be kept immune from attacks from the Northwest, control or at least favourable influence over the strategic region across the two key passes of Hindukush and Sulaiman mountain ranges had to be maintained by the rulers of the Indo-Gangetic plains.

It is only by the middle of the 18th century that this translated itself into an Afghan empire, however ephemeral, led by local chieftains. It simply followed the pattern set in previous historical periods and started expanding towards India. Afghan empire rose at the time and place of intersection of three rival but declining Islamic empires: the Moghul Empire in India, the Persian under the Safavid dynasty, and the Turki-Uzbek under the Astrakhani dynasty. Mughal rule of Northwest India by that time was nominal and the governors were a law by themselves. The Turkmen ruler Nadir Shah marched his army through Kandhar in 1738 to invade India the following year. When Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1747 near Kandhar on his return from India, Ahmed Shah Abdali was elected ruler of the Afghans at Kandhar.

Ranjit Singh's Kingdom

It is in this context that the Sikh military leadership emerged to challenge the crumbling Moghul power and the recently established Afghan power. The second

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half of the 18th century was also the period when the Sikh power started to rise under twelve *misls,* often fighting among themselves.[3] Ahmad Shah had wrested Kabul from the Moghuls and by the time of his death in 1773, his empire included all area west of Yamuna River.[4] But the main revenue of the Afghan ruler (besides the loot from numerous raids into India) at the time of Shah Shuja's first reign came from the revenue-rich provinces of Sindh, Multan, Kashmir, Peshawar, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan. Ranjit Singh brought the twelve independent *misls* together under his leadership and assumed the title and functions of the Maharaja at Lahore in 1799. His initial thrust was to exercise hegemony over the cis-Sutlej area to the south, controlled mostly by Sikh rulers in Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Kalsia, etc, since the British after Lord Cornwallis took over as Governor General in 1805 under instructions from the Court of Directors of the East India Company had dissolved all earlier treaties with rulers west of the Yammuna River.[6] The British power was expanding to this region and while they had earlier committed to limiting their own control only up to the line of Yamuna River[7], pressure was put to persuade Ranjit Singh to confine himself to the River Sutlej as his eastern boundary. Recognising that British power was now extensive and rising, he prudently covered this flank through treaties with the British and focused his attention on the region to the north and west.[8] From then onward, the expansion and consolidation of the Sikh kingdom took place into the then provinces of Kashmir, Northwest Frontier, Multan (with Bahawalpur as a tributary). The most important consequences of this arrangement was the reversal of the nearly a century old process of the Afghan rule and domination of Punjab.

Ranjit Singh's Afghanistan Policy

Historical evidence indicates that Maharaja Ranjit Singh understood the strategic and geographical realities of Afghanistan and kept himself abreast of great power moves.[9] In spite of a life packed with conquests and military campaigns, he did not even attempt an invasion into Afghanistan. As a source of revenue and resources, Afghanistan had very little to offer. In fact it would require the resources and strength of a much larger imperial power to control the strategic frontier along Kabul-Kandhar axis. In the past, this had been provided by the Ashoka's empire and the early Moghuls. But as these empires weakened, their ability to maintain control over Kabul and Kandhar declined at a much faster rate. It is interesting to make a comparative assessment of Sikh, British and Pakistani strategy towards Afghanistan. All three were conscious of the developments beyond Afghanistan and the role great powers were playing at different periods.

Great Power Geopolitics

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The British were deeply concerned at the end of the 18th century with French power expanding into Persia and thence into India. The two imperial powers were competing across the world. The French knew that British power rested almost entirely on the control and conduct of its trade with the East, where India was central. British maritime dominance made it difficult for the French to gain footholds in key areas of Asia. But Napoleon's Syrian campaign worried the British and the French mission to Persia in 1806 seriously added to these concerns. When the Treaty of Tilsit was signed in 1807 between France and Russia, the emperors of both countries made an open declaration for displacing the British from India. Under the 1807 Treaty of Finkenstein, French General Gardanne, along with 70 officers, was named to reorganise and train the Persian army in the latest methods of warfare. The British as a consequence sought good relations with Ranjit Singh while the perception of French threat remained or when the Russian threat loomed more. Ranjit Singh on the other hand was cautious and even delayed signing the Treaty of Amritsar to 25th April, 1809 waiting for intelligence information from Teheran and Peshawar.[10]

The expansion of Russian Empire southward into Central Asia increased the apprehension that it would follow the historical precedence of moving into Afghanistan and following it up with an invasion into India. This was to later produce the Great Game which continued into the 20th century with the Soviet Union finally moving into Afghanistan militarily in 1979. Pakistan had started to actively interfere in Afghanistan since 1973 to destabilise it using Afghan groups backed by Pakistan army. It agreed to be the front-line state for United States war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s fought through proxy of Afghan *Mujahideen*, a war managed by intelligence agencies of the United States and Pakistan.[11]

Territorial Boundary and Defence

Ranjit Singh recognised the importance of Afghanistan for the security of his kingdom. But he decided to ensure that security through a combination of maintaining defensible borders and diplomacy. He decided to physically stay out of Afghanistan although many foreigners are believed to have suggested to him repeatedly to capture Kabul.[12] But he did not attempt this instead building the military outpost at Jamrud at the opening of the Khyber Pass and remained diplomatically engaged with the contenders for the throne at Kabul. He defined the western boundary of his kingdom along the foothills running generally parallel to and west of the Indus valley and had a series of mutually supporting forts built and garrisoned them. The wisdom of this boundary may be judged from the fact that it has remained so ever since then and forms Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan even today.

The region west of the Indus River was inhabited by violent and unruly Pathans.

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Initially, Ranjit Singh conquered the tribes arranged for nominal tributes from the governors. But when the rise of Dost Muhammad after 1826 (when he seized Kabul) threatened to upset this arrangement by a possible invasion by him to capture Peshawar and the territory west of the Indus,[13] he brought the whole region under direct rule and appointed his governors along with garrisoning of troops in the forts built along the belt. According to N. K. Sinha, "The military arrangements on the North Western Frontier were calculated to defend the Punjab against invasion from Afghanistan, to prevent an en masse gathering of tribes, to facilitate the collection of tribute and, where necessary, to overawe the tribes and keep open the means of communication."[14] Ranjit Singh also had secured his Eastern flank by building friendly relations with the British and to the south by not opposing British hegemony in Sindh (although he was keen to annexe the contiguous provinces to both sides).

Contrary to Ranjit Singh's strategy, and the logic of geography and strategy, the British sought to exercise a more direct control over Kabul-Kandhar axis without controlling the hinterland, and this resulted in the First Afghan War and its disastrous outcome.[15] It finally stepped back to settle on the same frontier as that of Ranjit Singh which now goes under the name of Durand Line.

Compared to Ranjit Singh's strategy later adopted by the British, Pakistan started to diffuse the Durand Line as a boundary violating it in numerous ways. By late 1970s, it promoted the growth of narcotics and helped establish heroin factories in the frontier regions encouraging free movement across the Durand Line. Narcotics profits were used to fund the covert war against the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. This had given rise to the term "Golden Crescent" being used to define the area. Arms factories producing sophisticated weapons in the tribal belts were promoted till names like Dara Adem Khel became bywords in strategic literature worldwide. This it followed while maintaining a long-term hostility with its more powerful neighbour, India, to its east and frequently initiating violent (covert and overt) wars with it.

Pakistan also sought to expand its direct control over Afghanistan in the name of religion. This assumed more serious dimensions after 1971 when East Pakistan broke away and undercut the very logic of Pakistan's creation. Gulbudin Hikmatyar was sent into Afghanistan to foment trouble as early as 1973 and became one of the favoured Mujahideen leaders in the 1980s with his headquarters in Peshawar. When the Najib-ullah government was replaced by the Mujahideen government, Hikmatyar was appointed the Prime Minister. Pakistan sought to become the "frontline" on one of the super powers in their clash of interests in Afghanistan on the basis that this would endear it to the United States and finally lead to economic advantages. But the larger strategic objective was to be able to exercise political control over Afghanistan and the possible routes for oil and gas supplies from Central Asia into Pakistan for

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further export. When the Mujahideen government refused to follow the dictates of Islamabad, Pakistan created the Taliban and supported it with its own military power to oust the Mujahideen from Kabul and take control of Kabul in 1996. The Taliban started to pursue its own radical policies egged on by the radical elements of Pakistan army who constitute the ISI.[16] The repression by this rebel regime and its pursuit of religious fanaticism and spread of international terrorism led to the UN imposing sanctions and finally the US-led coalition undertook the military campaign to dismantle the repressive Taliban regime.

In the totality of its policy over the last three decades, Pakistan sought to encourage the "unruly turbulent and violent" Afghans further toward violence and terrorism in the name of religion to hide its own strategic goals of creating a regime in Kabul hostile to India. Having dismantled the Afghan Empire from North India, Ranjit Singh on the other hand sought to deal with Afghans with diplomacy and non-interference in their internal affairs from a position of strength (including domestic prosperity and stability), support of legitimate ruler (Shah Shujah whom he gave protection in his court and supported him), strong defensive positions at the Khyber Pass and establishing a defensible frontier (which was also adopted by the British even when it was the sole super power of the world and the most powerful military power in Asia), and secured his kingdom by covering the other vulnerable flank to the south by maintaining friendly relations with the powerful British.

Bamett Rubin writing in the days after the Mujahideen government backed by Pakistan was established in Kabul was prophetic when he said, "The continued turmoil in Afghanistan has already contributed to the civil war in Tajikistan, to authoritarianism in Uzbekistan, to growing Russian aggressiveness prompted by fear of Islam along Russia's southern frontier, and to the dissemination of military skills to radical Islamists in South Asia and the Arab world. If the international community does not find a way to rebuild Afghanistan, a floodtide of weapons, cash, and contraband will escape that state's porous boundaries and make the world less secure for all."[17] Pakistan then created the Taliban to oust the Mujahideen and Afghanistan went further downhill.

After rolling back the Afghan Empire and three decades of a sagacious policy toward Afghanistan, Ranjit Singh's kingdom was powerful, prosperous and a factor of stability for the whole region. On the contrary, three decades of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy has ruined Afghans and their country (with 3 million refugees outside the country for nearly a generation) by its policy of creating new rebels to control the country, 110 million land-mines dotting the landscape, two superpowers successively undertaking a war inside Afghanistan with their full might, rampant violence and terrorism to the extent of the region being the epicentre of global terrorism (now being rolled back by a global coalition led by the United States) and a factor of

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instability which may take a decade or more of great power, deep political and economic engagement to *vector* it, besides seeking the elusive "strategic depth" of Afghanistan against India its powerful eastern neighbour, with Pakistan having gone broke and in the grip of serious internal violence and turmoil, with narcotics and transnational crime seeping into its society at all levels, and above all, a lost generation of Afghans (and a large proportion of Pakistanis).

This is the real difference between Ranjit Singh's Afghanistan policy and Punjab's later rulers of Pakistan.

– Air Commodore Jasjit Singh

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11

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH AND SYED AHMAD BREILVI'S JEHAD

There is something both puzzling and paradoxical about Syed Ahmed Breilvi's incursion into the frontier region of Ranjit Singh's empire and the long-range impact it had. By itself, Breilvi's insurrection which lasted over half a decade did not upset Ranjit Singh or cause him any real concern. According to Sohan Lal, his court diarist, Ranjit Singh did not take notice of his activities promptly enough because, in the latter's opinion, Breilvi's movement did not represent a threat to his kingdom. His various battles with Ranjit Singh's force never posed anything like a challenge to his authority. It was perhaps for this reason that he never mounted a campaign against Breilvi.

In contrast, one is struck by the aftermath of the insurrection which was not all that sustained in character. It did not die with the death of Breilvi. This is clear from what continued to happen even after it had been crushed. For concrete evidence of it, one cannot do better than to turn to the space given to the *Wahabi* movement and its subsequent development as depicted in W.W. Hunter's book titled *The Indian Musalmans*. Breilvi's movement in favour of Islamic revivalism continued to flourish for several decades even after his death in 1831. In the book referred to above, which was published in 1871, out of four chapters, three were devoted to the aftermath of the movement launched by him. The first chapter is called the 'The Standing Rebel Camp on our Frontier' and the second one is called 'The Chronic Conspiracy within our Territory'. Among them, these two chapters take almost half the book.

Even the third chapter "The Decisions of Mohammadan Law Doctrine" deals with the same theme. Not only that, there are three appendices in the book. Each one of them quotes different authorities in support of the thesis advanced by Hunter to

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the effect that there was nothing in the Islamic ideology to suggest that confrontation with the British rulers was an unavoidable part of Islam. These are titled:

1) Decision of the Mecca Law Doctor
2) Decision of the Law Doctors of Northern India
3) Decision of the Calcutta Mohammedan Society

All this was done so as to make the point that what had been initiated by Breilvi was not in consonance with the Muslim law. There is only one chapter of about sixty pages which deals with the 'Wrongs of the Mohammedans under British Rule'. In order to explain things in their sequence, it may be added that Sir William Hunter, one of the prominent Civilian Officers posted in the Bengal Presidency (it then covered Bihar, Orissa, Assam and today's Bangladesh) was in this responding to a question mooted by Lord Mayo, the Governor General, at that time. The question was – "Are the Indian Musalmans bound by their Religion to rebel against the Queen?" The answer seemed to be more a disquisition on Breilvi's branch of Wahabism than a description of the wrongs being done to the Musalmans under the British rule.

In historical terms, Hunter's book marked a reversal of the anti-Muslim attitude, which the British rulers had developed after the 1857 Mutiny. For almost two decades, the Indian Muslims continued to be distrusted. Hunter's book was by implication a plea to move away from that policy. With the passage of years, that distrust gave way to a closer relationship with the Muslim community. In course of time, this shift of opinion led to the evolution of a new policy whereby Muslim opinion was mobilised against the Hindus. With the beginning of the 20th century and the emergence of the Indian Muslim League on the political stage, things began to change. But the roots of that change lay in that shift of policy, which the British rulers had adopted in the wake of the publication of Hunter's book.

Very few books in recent Indian history have been so influential as this book in particular. It was first published in 1871 and continued to be in circulation for the next five years. The book was not reprinted after 1876 and it has been reprinted only recently – in 2002 – because the book still continues to be read and is influential.

While the more fanatical of the Musalmans have thus engaged in overt sedition, the whole Mohammadan community has been openly deliberating on their obligation to rebel.[1]

The rest of the book is full of details of how the word of Breilvi spread over several parts of the subcontinent. As a matter of fact, the book describes in detail how a system was set up whereby Breilvi's ideas continued to be disseminated effectively. According to Hunter, while the headquarters of his movement were located in Sitana in the North West Frontier, Patna was the nerve centre of activity in the rest of India. An organised set up was established here and published what he called the

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'Teeming literature of Treason' and quite a part of it was in Bengal, which was substantially Muslim in character. A large number of *Wahabi* missionaries spread all over the country, including Bengal and set up quite a system whereby, as Hunter puts it, the 'Traitor's Settlement was set up all over the rural Bengal'. Hunter knew more about Bengal than any other part of India and that is why most of the references are to that part of the country.

The system established was somewhat like this. These missionaries settled down in various places and accustomed the people a regular system of contributions for the Holy War which continued to be conducted from Sitana and neighbouring areas. The man who collected funds locally received one fourth of the collection as his salary and became a link in a countrywide campaign. Perhaps, the south of India was excluded but the north of India right up to Eastern India was actively involved. These missionaries went from village to village and preached rebellion against the government. At the same time, they continued to levy money according to the system described above. So much of enthusiasm was generated, that groups of villages were organised into fiscal clusters and for each cluster there was a chief tax collector who worked in a voluntary capacity. Furthermore, quite a number, even from Bengal, offered themselves as *jehadis*.

After the annexation of the Punjab, there were a series of incidents on the North West Frontier, one after another, which were met by strong army action. In 1863 there was held what came to be called a long *Wahabi* trial. The man put on trial was Yahya Ali who was designated as the *Khalifa* in Patna. He ruled over the whole collection machinery with a firm but gentle hand and kept in touch with a large number of people working for him. Yahya Ali belonged to an affluent family and maintained good connections with the local British authorities in Patna. After the trial, in course of which the entire system had been exposed, he was sentenced to death. It was difficult to believe that something was happening underground in which hundreds of people were involved and yet a vigilant government like the British government in India remained unaware of what was happening. The title of the chapter – 'The Chronic Conspiracy within our Territory' – says it all.

How is it that as long as he was alive, Breilvi was no more influential than someone who created minor problems and was eventually taken care of and, yet when he died, he bequeathed a legacy of rebellion which continued to survive for decades together and caused endless headache to the British rulers in India? This question will be discussed again later. Meanwhile it would be in order to look at the ground developments as they took place in their sequence.

II

Who was Ahmad Shah Breilvi? He was born in 1786 in Rae Bareilly, U.P. As a

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young boy he was known for his interest in sports and games, swimming, wrestling, etc., but not his studies. He was yet in his 20's when he left for Delhi for a few years for studies, under the tutelage of Shah Abdul Aziz who was the son of Shah Waliullah, a well-known Muslim thinker and ideologue. He stayed in Delhi for a few years and studied Persian and Islamic theology. A couple of years later when he returned home, everyone was impressed by his maturity of outlook and straight forwardness. Within a few months, he got married.

But he did not stay at home very long. Within a couple of years, he took service with Amir Khan Pindari as a horseman. Amir Khan grew so fond of him that not only did he select him as the head of his bodyguard, he also began to consult him in regard to other matters.

In less than a decade, however, Amir Khan disbanded his troops and made friends with the British and was designated as the Nawab of Tonk. But this was not to Syed Ahmad's liking. Over the years, he had developed a certain outlook on life. Wherever he went, he was looked upon as someone who had qualities of leadership. It was during his wanderings and, particularly his stay at Rampur where a large number of Afghans had settled down, that he decided to launch a campaign against Ranjit Singh.

While Ranjit Singh had the reputation of being a fair and even-handed person, no one should forget that Ranjit Singh's rise to power had been against the tradition of the preceding 6-7 centuries. Ever since Mahmud of Ghazni had led his attacks into India and had established his power in North India, Punjab had been ruled by Muslim rulers century after century. Ranjit Singh was the first man to break this convention. Partly at the instigation of the Afghans whom he had met in Rampur and partly because of his own physical location – Rajasthan or U.P., whichever way it is put – Breilvi thought up a plan in his mind to oust Sikh power from the Punjab. But before this could happen, some other significant developments took place.

The most important of them was in July 1821. He decided to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. For the preceding century or so, the Portuguese had virtually taken control of the seas. People from countries like India found it difficult to cross the seas and reach Mecca. Breilvi took an unconventional stand. He said that, despite all the dangers on the sea, he would leave for pilgrimage to Mecca and whoever wanted to join him was welcome to do so. He went to the extent of saying that if someone could not afford it, he would pay for them. Something like 400 people joined him on this pilgrimage to Mecca. Funds for it came from various sources. While going to Calcutta, he travelled through the entire U.P., Bihar belt and travelled through cities like Allahabad, Benaras, Ghazipur, Patna, Bhagalpur and reached Calcutta. His tour through these places turned out to be so popular that hundreds of people became his followers. At one stage, in Calcutta, the crowd was so unmanageable that not everyone could reach him in physical

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terms. Therefore, a turban was spread out. Whoever could touch the turban was taken to have touched him.

The visit to Mecca proved to be a turning point in his career. Henceforward, he emerged as an important person who had the capacity to attract a large number of followers wherever he went. Instinctively, he was drawn to the teachings of Wahab and this both helped him to formulate his own simple code of puritanical beliefs and establish his leadership. Wahab's ideas were in conflict with what prevailed in Arabia at that time. Somehow, his ideas appealed to a local Arab chief who took a fancy to him and married his daughter to him.

At that time, Saudi Arabia was under the control of the Turks. Before long, some kind of a confrontation developed between the Turks who ruled Arabia at that time and the local chief, who, fortified with the new *Wahabi* ideas, put up resistance. Without going into these details, what needs to be noted is that the local government viewed him with suspicion. And he was sought to be expelled. After some ups and downs, he returned to India with his followers some two years later after he had left India.

The aura of having been to Mecca and propounded certain new ideas led him to formulate his ideas further and before long he decided to shift his centre of operations to the North West Frontier of India. More about it later.

The British were fully aware of what was happening. They were also aware of his plans and the various campaigns upon which he had embarked. But they were not inclined to interfere in what he was doing for the obvious reason that his target was Ranjit Singh and not the British Government. Almost every observer of those days is agreed on one thing. Breilvi was in the tradition of Muslim reformers. Even though the British were an emerging power, not many people looked upon them as the future rulers of India. Ranjit Singh was the immediate target. He had displaced his Muslim predecessors and taken over power. In his way of thinking, the obvious enemy was Ranjit Singh and not the British.

There is no clear evidence to prove that the British egged on Breilvi or financed him in any way. As long as the target was Ranjit Singh, it suited the British and Ranjit Singh could not complain either.

III

A question which Breilvi posed was: Who is the enemy? Till then, the British had not become so powerful as to look large on the horizon. The man who really loomed large on the political horizon in Northern India was Ranjit Singh. Out of nowhere almost, he had emerged as the most dominant leader of the various Sikh *misls*. Within a few years, he outdistanced all his rivals and established himself as the

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ruler of Punjab. By the time Breilvi appeared on the scene, Ranjit Singh had not only defeated all his rivals one by one, but had also brought a large number of local rulers under his control. The last real notable battle that he fought was in respect of Multan.

Multan for a good half-century or even more had been a locally powerful fiefdom. Between his early years and 1818 when Ranjit Singh captured Multan, there had been a number of engagements with the ruler of Multan. Each one had meant continuing loss of power of the Nawab. When Ranjit Singh decided to capture Multan in 1818, he went about the job decisively and the outcome was the defeat of the Nawab and the merger of Multan into Ranjit Singh's kingdom.

Soon after that, Ranjit Singh extended his control over Kashmir. Kashmir had been under the control of the Afghan rulers for more than half a century. By the time Ranjit Singh emerged as the most powerful ruler in northern India, it was not difficult for him to capture Kashmir.

Without going into further details, this much may be said that before the appearance of Syed Ahmad Breilvi on the scene, the area of the north of Attock had been brought under control by Ranjit Singh. A few years later, Peshawar too was brought under his direct control. But during the uncertain in-between years, Peshawar was by and large controlled by what are known as the Barakzai brothers. They controlled Peshawar but on behalf of Ranjit Singh. A few years later, more or less corresponding to the advent of Breilvi on the scene, Peshawar too came under the direct control of Ranjit Singh.

A question, which needs to be asked at this stage, is how is it that Breilvi appeared on the scene and challenged the might of Ranjit Singh. As already stated, the British did not loom very large on the horizon. But Ranjit Singh did. Therefore, when Breilvi decided to confront Ranjit Singh, it made some sense to the political observers. There was also another factor at work in the background. To the north of Attock, there were a number of Muslim states. In case of any difficulty, Breilvi felt that he could draw upon their resources and seek their fraternal help. The decision to pose a challenge to Ranjit Singh was not a rash decision in that sense. It was properly thought out and well planned.

Before he embarked upon his campaign against Ranjit Singh, Breilvi did a considerable amount of preparation while still in India.[2] He decided to take 6-700 people along with him. After they had done a survey and established themselves, others were to be sent for later. At the same time, he decided that instead of attempting to pass through Punjab, he should enter the Northwest of India by travelling via Bhawalpur and Sind. His own base of operations was Rajasthan. Since Sind was next door, that seemed to be the obvious thing to do. Having entered Afghanistan via Bolan Pass and established contact with some of the neighbouring rulers, Breilvi

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eventually decided to concentrate on the area around Peshawar. Peshawar was controlled by four brothers as mentioned above. It had been conquered by Ranjit Singh who however had delegated the job to the Barakzai brothers.

The first thing that Breilvi did was to fight a battle in which one of his important commanders, Azim Khan, was killed. Despite this initial handicap, he set up his headquarters at Naushehra near Peshawar, and assembled a substantial group of local people around him. Amongst them were the four brothers who controlled Peshawar, the chieftains of Panchtar, Amb, and several others. There was a crowd of several thousands and an atmosphere of *jehad* was created. At this mass gathering, various speeches were delivered and a written communication was addressed to Ranjit Singh, which was read out. It read as follows:

1. Either accept Islam and become our brother with equal rights. But there is no coercion involved and this is to be voluntary in character.
2. Accept our overlordship and undertake to pay the *jezya*. In that case we will defend you with all the resources at our command.
3. The last thing is that if both these demands are not acceptable to you, get ready to fight us. But please remember that the whole of Afghanistan and India are with us. Perhaps you are not as keen upon drinking wine, as we are to lay down our lives.[3]

As should be evident, there was nothing that was not serious about the challenge issued to Ranjit Singh and the intentions of Syed Ahmad Breilvi. He was cast in the classical mould. A fighter and a *jehadi* though, he had not found the atmosphere congenial in Afghanistan's neighbouring areas. However, the situation in the neighbourhood of Peshawar was more favourable and he decided to dig in that area.

In response, what did Ranjit Singh do? A cousin of his, Budh Singh Sandhawalia, who happened to be in that neighbourhood took on the challenge and mobilised an army of 10,000 people. Before a face-to-face battle could be fought, Breilvi's men organized what is called the battle for Akora. This place is 18 miles from Attock across the river Indus. Breilvi organised his forces and prepared for a night attack. Amongst those who had lined up in support of Breilvi were people from different tribes, like Yusufzais and Khattaks. The core consisted of a few hundred people who had come with Breilvi from India. In the raid organised by Breilvi's men, Budh Singh was taken by surprise. Consequently, Budh Singh lost about 500 men whereas all that Breilvi lost was a small fraction of men - less than a hundred. In a sense, the first round had gone in favour of Breilvi. After the fight, he shifted his headquarters to Sitana, which continued to be the headquarters of his movement long after he died.

The next battle was an attack on Hazro. Indeed, Breilvi's men once again showed considerable initiative. Hazro was a small business centre and had an accumulation

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of considerable commercial merchandize. Since Breilvi's men were a somewhat disorganised lot and were not fighting under one's command, they started looting too early in the battle with the result there was a certain amount of disorder. While there is a certain established system in the proportion of loot, which could be claimed by the *jehadis*, there was no such system in this case. The atmosphere was one of anarchy and everyone did what suited him.

This in turn gave rise to further disorder. After the initial disorder and after a certain amount of consultation, it was decided that the whole thing had to be reorganised in such a way that Syed Ahmad Breilvi was recognised as the leader. This is exactly what happened. In the first phase of Breilvi's intervention, the four brothers who controlled Peshawar had sided with him. So did the general mass of the Pathans. An atmosphere of *jehad* had been created and this is precisely what was aimed at.

It was in this atmosphere that Breilvi got himself elected as the *Imam* of the insurgent community. It would be an oversimplification to presume that the elections went through without anyone feeling red in the face. There was a lot of under-the-surface murmuring as also a certain amount of open opposition. In fact, the news of his election also travelled to India and mixed reactions were received from there too.

Meanwhile it should not be necessary to go into the details of the various ups and downs in the confrontation between Breilvi and Ranjit Singh's forces. Something like a dozen battles were fought. Details regarding those battles do not have to be provided here because the more important thing was how some of the initiatives taken by him had met with resistance and this in turn had tended to isolate him.

IV

At this stage, it may not be out of place to refer both to the geography and sociology of the place. In his first incursion away from India, Breilvi had gone as far as Kabul via Sind. It was after a brief stay in Kabul that he came to Peshawar and the area surrounding it. The reason why he decided to concentrate here is partly because of the Punjab connection. Peshawar had been already captured by Ranjit Singh. As a matter of fact, the dismemberment of Afghanistan in the wake of Abdali's death was an important factor in this situation.

After the battle of Naushera in which Akali Phoola Singh and others had distinguished themselves, the back of Afghan resistance to Ranjit Singh had been broken. As a result, there was political confusion in Afghanistan. This made it possible for Ranjit Singh to capture and hold both Kashmir and Peshawar. Kashmir too had been under Afghan rule for a long time. Once that dominance declined, the way was open for Ranjit Singh to capture Kashmir. After that came the turn of Peshawar.

Here the strategy adopted by Ranjit Singh was that even though the Barakzai

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family had suffered a setback, the fact that they had agreed to accept the suzerainty of Ranjit Singh mattered a great deal. For half a decade this kind of undefined arrangement continued. But by 1827, i.e., one year after the advent of Breilvi on the scene, there was a sudden upswing in the temper of the people. As referred to above, an atmosphere of *jehad* had developed. This was fortified by the first two victories of Breilvi's men. One was the battle for Akora and the second was the attack on Hazro. In both of them, Breilvi's men had acquitted themselves well.

What upset the apple cart however was his election as the *Imam* as also the Supreme Commander. Otherwise, however, things were going in his favour. As far as Breilvi was concerned, he emerged on the scene at a time when the Muslim society in India was in a state of disintegration. Political power had slipped out of the hands of the Mughals and the British were gradually beginning to capture power. In this state of general disillusionment, three Muslim intellectuals stood out within a span of two centuries. These were Shah Waliullah, Syed Ahmad Breilvi and Sir Syed Ahmed.

Shah Waliullah had come before Ranjit Singh while Syed Breilvi was his contemporary. Sir Syed Ahmed need not be discussed here for he appeared on the scene much later. One question that each Muslim thinker had sought an answer to was – What next after the decline of the Mughal Empire? By virtue of his scholarship and originality, Shah Waliullah stood out in the early 18th century. The situation within India was that the Mughals were losing power and the Marathas were advancing and a little behind the Marathas were the British who had established their own power. In this power vacuum, a man like Shah Waliullah was looked up to both for leadership and guidance.

He had played a role so to speak in inviting Ahmad Shah Abdali into India. Abdali came to Delhi, delivered a few further knocks to the Mughal emperor. But for the rest, the latter concentrated on the Punjab. In fact, he detached Punjab from the Mughal empire and made it into a province of Afghanistan. That was the situation in the middle of the 18th century after which he came under persistent attacks from the Sikh *misls*. Before long it became an impossible job for him to even hold his possessions in the Punjab. The *misls* were riding high and by the 60s of the 18th century, the balance had tilted against Abdali dynasty. After that came Ranjit Singh's empire and the balance turned even more decisively against the Afghans or the Mughals, whichever way it is put.

It was in this background that Syed Ahmad Breilvi appeared on the scene. It was a master stroke on his part that he decided to concentrate on the area around Peshawar. Peshawar had not yet been annexed by Ranjit Singh. With his energy and ambition and also his organising ability, Breilvi was able to put up quite a front against Ranjit Singh. It is another matter that he could not do so successfully and was defeated in

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the end. But what he attempted to do was to reestablish the Islamic power in that part of India where things were fluid and uncertain and there was no such thing as a stable government.

This was the same area, which later on gave a lot of headache to the British rulers. After 1947, this very area became the breeding ground for the Taliban, who eventually went on to capture power in Afghanistan. As stated above, both in geographical and sociological terms, this was the right location for Breilvi to concentrate upon. What caused a decline in the fortunes of Breilvi needs to be gone into in some detail. In this connection, a comment made by Mubarik Ali may be relevant and is quoted below:

> As every movement needs some moral justification for its action, Sayyid Ahmad convinced his disciples that the Muslims of the Punjab were suffering under Sikh rule. They had no religious freedom; the mosques were converted into stables; the Azan (call of worship) was prohibited; and Muslim women were dishonoured. There is no doubt that some of the extremist Sikhs had adopted a hostile attitude towards the Muslims and had violated their religious sanctity, but as a whole, the rule of Ranjit Singh was tolerant and there were a number of Muslims in the administration and the army. That was the reason that the Muslims of the Punjab did not respond to the call of Sayyid Ahmad and remained loyal to Ranjit Singh. On the contrary, Muslim soldiers from other parts of India fought against him in different battles.[4]

Breilvi, it can be stated without any fear of contradiction, proceeded on the assumption that, as the various Arab tribes were consolidated under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century AD, something of the same kind could now be done in respect of the Pathans as well in this area. But nothing of that kind happened. On the contrary, there was hostility and opposition to him and his dominance. When, for instance, he was declared to be the *Imam*, some of the people in the tribal area reacted against his assuming this position and treated it as an attempt to deprive them of whatever autonomy or power they had.

Breilvi for his part did not understand the people that he was dealing with. Instead of combining under his leadership, they found it difficult to accept him as their leader. He was neither a Pathan nor had he been invited to come to their help. Consequently, a kind of adversary relationship developed between them and him. As if this was not enough, two things in particular offended the Pathans.

Breilvi started interfering in the tribal customs. According to the Pathan marriage customs, the man had to pay something to the bride's family at the time of marriage. This was something that Breilvi had not seen for himself when he was growing up. Nor did it appear right to him. Customs were different in that part of India from where he had come. He tried to tell the Pathans that what they were doing was both unfair and un-Islamic. But, the Pathans would have none of it.[5]

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Things in fact went far beyond what has been stated above. Since, most of the Indian who had come were not married and wanted to get married, the Pathan families were forced in certain cases to give their daughters to the Indians. To quote Mubarik Ali again:

> Moreover, those Pathan families whose girls were married to the Indian mujahideen were not spared by the fellow Pathans who reprimanded them on marrying their girls 'to the black and ugly Indians'.[6]

The Pathans felt so outraged at what was happening that it led to open confrontation between the two. As a matter of fact, after the first war when Breilvi's men did have a quick victory, things became very difficult with the result that in most of the battles fought between his men and Ranjit Singh's soldiers later, things went in favour of the latter and the *mujahideen* who had come from India were at the receiving end, both in the battlefield and in terms of social esteem. The situation became so difficult that it was not an accident that, in the last battle which Breilvi's men fought, he was both outnumbered and outmaneuvered.

There were a number of reasons why the *jehad* movement did not succeed. The more important of them, according to Mubarik Ali, was that the social distance between the *mujahideen* who came from India and the local population continued to remain unbridged:

> "...They didn't study the geography of the area, history of the tribes, tribals' systems, traditions and habits, neither did they learn the language. They failed to understand that the linguistic relations assumed by them that belonging to the same religion was enough and that being good Muslims the Pathans would support their cause."[7]

Secondly, not all the volunteers that came from India were religiously committed. Some of them came to loot and plunder and amass wealth in the garb of *jehadis*.

Thirdly, most of the volunteers had no military experience nor were they trained by professionals. Therefore, there was no discipline in the army. Consequently, the *jehad* movement could neither defeat the Sikhs nor set-up an Islamic state in the northwest frontier.

V

Some of the points made earlier may now be recalled. The first one is to what extent was Ranjit Singh right to treat the incursion of Breilvi into the frontier areas as something, which would be taken care of eventually. Ranjit Singh's judgement in this matter proved correct. Breilvi and his men fought a number of battles spread from 1826 to 1831. As already observed, he had some marginal successes to begin with. Later on he got involved with local controversies, the most important of them being the marriage customs, which prevailed amongst the Pathans. By seeking to impose what he thought was a more rational system upon the Pathans, he aroused a certain

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degree of avoidable hostility. This narrowed his social base and, in the ultimate analysis, isolated him to such an extent that he could not withstand the organised onslaughter of Ranjit Singh's forces.

Secondly, he overlooked another thing. Ranjit Singh's army consisted of the three communities that inhabited the Punjab. Quite a proportion of them consisted of the Punjabi Muslims. They were recruited into the army like everyone else. In the case of artillery, even the commanding officer was a Muslim. As in any well-governed state, the policies were laid down by the head of the government and the army simply carried them out. In this case too, the decisions were made by Ranjit Singh and implemented by his army.

Breilvi had tried to create a Muslim state in the northwest of India but he did not succeed. On the contrary, against Ranjit Singh's army, Breilvi's *jehadis*, could not carry the Sikh day because the army was well-organised as also well-disciplined. To put it another way, had Breilvi's line of approach been successful, the local Muslims should have ganged up with him and fought Ranjit Singh's army. That however did not happen. One can go further and say that the rebellion led by Breilvi proved, if proof were needed, that the appeal to Islam, which Breilvi adopted as his guiding principle, did not work in this particular case.

There is one more dimension to this situation. Till the occupation of Kashmir and, subsequently, the Peshawar area, all conquests of Ranjit Singh had been confined to what is called Punjab proper. Multan for instance, which had been conquered as late as 1818 was a part of the Punjab. In other words, Ranjit Singh in the first phase of expansion and consolidation conquered those parts of the Punjab where Punjabi was spoken and there was some kind of an ethnic bonding. Ranjit Singh's original intention was to unify Punjab, both politically and culturally and he succeeded in it.

Unfortunately, there developed a cleavage between the Phoolkian rulers and Ranjit Singh. The area to the south of the Satluj was put outside the political pale of Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh did not want this kind of arrangement. But the Phoolkian states wanted it and successfully secured the protection of the East India Company in their favour and against the intentions of Ranjit Singh. Given that unenviable situation, Ranjit Singh had no choice except to fall in line with the British that he would not extend his domain to the south of the river Satluj.

As a result of this understanding between the East India Company and Ranjit Singh, the latter started expanding in other directions. That is what led him to the conquest of Kashmir and subsequently of the Peshawar region. The expansion into Ladakh followed from his conquest to Kashmir. Of course, the British successfully prevented him from annexing Sind, which he wanted to do. But the British outsmarted him.

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Ranjit Singh's presence in the Peshawar area was mainly as that of a conqueror. Since, the Afghans had been in occupation both of Kashmir and the Peshawar area, it had led to a confrontation with the Afghans, and Ranjit Singh ousted them from both these areas. In one sense, therefore, Breilvi was on a strong wicket when he decided to confront Ranjit Singh in the Peshawar area. Ethnically speaking, it may be added, there was little in common between the rest of the Punjab and the Peshawar area. Breilvi tried to take advantage of this fact but it did not work. There is an interesting story quoted by Sheikh Mohammad Ikram:

> When Maulana Syed Ahmad Breilvi went to Rampur in connection with his preaching and missionary activities, he came in contact with several foreign Afghans who had come there. They narrated a painful story to him. It became possible because of his contact with those Afghans who were visiting that place. They narrated that, while travelling through Punjab, "We stopped to drink water somewhere on the way. What we saw was that some Sikh women were taking out water from the wells that were at work. Since we did not know the local language, we put our hands on our mouth and explained to them through gestures that we were thirsty and wanted to drink water. Then those women looked left and right and spoke in *Pashto* and told us that they were Muslim women who belonged to a certain area of the frontier. They also explained that they had been captured against their will and were living as wives of the local people. Hearing this, we felt very upset that Muslim women had been captured against their wishes and converted into Kafirs. O! Syed, you are a man of God! Plan it in such a way that this kind of Kafirhood is put an end to. Thereupon the Syed said in response that, God willing, he would soon lead a *jehad* against the Sikhs."[8]

He himself quotes from another book. Since the book is in Urdu, the relevant portion is translated herewith.

According to the author, this information is given in the autobiography of one Maulvi Mohammed Jaffar. If this incident is true and such a thing could happen, Syed Ahmad Breilvi seems to have made up his mind at that time to lead a *jehad* against Ranjit Singh. This was quite some time before he actually embarked upon it. Somehow the idea kept on rotating in his mind and eventually he did embark upon it.

Ranjit Singh was the first non-Muslim to have captured power in Punjab after almost seven hundred years. After the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, Punjab came to be ruled by the Muslims. Owing to what happened in the 18th century and the prolonged confrontation with Abdali, by the third quarter of the 18th century, Abdali had been ousted from Punjab and instead the *misls* had taken over. Ranjit Singh in turn took over from where the *misls* had left. He himself belonged to one of the *misls*. Most of them were always at war with one another. Through his skilful maneuvering and military brilliance, he was able to outwit others and became the ruler of the Punjab.

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As stated already, in the first two decades of the 18th century, he consolidated his rule in what ethnically constituted the Punjab. In the third decade of his rule, he expanded his rule into Kashmir and the Peshawar areas. The fact of *jehad* as mounted by Ahmad Shah Breilvi and his defeat a few years later go to underline two points. One, that he was militarily more powerful than everyone else and, secondly, as generally accepted, he was able to unify the people of Punjab politically and culturally and carry everyone along with him, including the Muslims. The one important significance of the insurgency led by Breilvi and its eventful defeat lies in this fact that Ranjit Singh's policies of treating all his subjects alike had been vindicated. No one responded to the call of *jehad* given by Breilvi. After a few initial successes, he was driven into a corner and ultimately liquidated.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the seed planted by Breilvi did not disappear. The centre established at Sitana in the Northwest Frontier continued to remain active for another half a century. Hunter's book on *The Indian Musalman* gives graphical details of what continued to happen. If Breilvi was defeated and liquidated, the greater cause for it was the military superiority of Ranjit Singh.

A reference was made above to the third member of the triumvirate. This refers to Sir Syed Ahmed emergence on the scene by the third quarter of the 19th century. By then, the political scene had undergone a complete transformation. The kind of controversy initiated by Shah Waliullah had been overtaken by events. What Breilvi had sought to propagate flickered for a while only. After that, the only logical thing to do was what Sir Syed Ahmed did.

A totally new development took place after the exit of the British from India in 1947 and the establishment of Pakistan. The Muslims neither in India, nor in Pakistan or Afghanistan knew how to come to term with what has been happening in the rest of the world during the last few centuries. It is difficult to anticipate what the shape of things is going to be. All that one can legitimately say is that Islam is yet to come to terms with the modern civilisation. What Breilvi attempted to do in those turbulent times was to strike out in a certain direction, which he understood.

What he did not understand, and millions of others still do not understand, is that what worked in the 7th century and the succeeding few centuries cannot work today. The rise of the West and several other powerful countries since then had led to a situation where some basic questions have to be asked and are not being asked. The life and career of Syed Ahmad Breilvi is a case in point.

– Amrik Singh

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Notes and References

1 W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, 1871, reprinted in 2002 by Rupa & Co.
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2 For details, I have mainly relied upon Shiek Mohammad Ikram's *Mauja-i-Kausar* which gives an account of the religious and educational history of the Muslims from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day and gives a detailed picture of the rise of Ahmed Shah Breilvi and his companions like Maulana Ismail Shaheed. I have used the 10th edition printed in 1979 and published by Idar-i-sifaqat-i-Islamia, Lahore.

3 Syed Abdul Hassan Ali Nadir, *Life of Syed Ahmad Shah Nawe* in Urdu, United India Press, Lucknow, December 1941, (second edition), p. 145.

4 Mubarak Ali Khan, *The Ulema. Sufis and Intellectuals*, Fiction House, Lahore, 1996, pp. 84-85.

5 Ibid., pp. 88-91.

6 Ibid., p. 91.

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12

VOYAGE TO THE HOME ETERNAL (*NIJGHAR*)

Ranjit Singh had a robust physical constitution. He was of medium size. Alexander Burnes estimated his height at 5'.3" while Princip thought it could be at the most 5'.7" when he was standing erect. He had a well-built body, neither fat nor lean. His complexion was brown-grey. His head was square and large for his stature. His forehead was broad. He was full of expression and vitality and was marked with deep scars from small pox - the disease which gripped him in his childhood and left these scars on his face along with loss of sight in his left eye. His right eye was large and prowess, brown and blazing with light and fire, quick and searching.[1]

He was a keen observant. Even in his first glance, he could gauge the character of any visitor. His awe was so deep-impacting, that even the worst ruffians could not help trembling. This quality was largely responsible to enable him to pick right types of men for his various departments in the absence of any written test or passing an examination. His neck was muscular and his shoulders and chest were broad and stout. His arms were long, muscular and flexible enough to enable him to wield a sword or a lance with dexterity. His grip was so tight that it was difficult to loosen it. "He enjoyed usually good health, took regular exercise every day, slept well and had an excellent appetite. All functions of his body were normal."[2]

His virility was strong and to maintain it he could take any step. He invited Hakim Baghdadi for consultation. At his instance, he prepared an electuary from Sakun Kur Fish which the Maharaja found very effective. As per the opinion of the German traveler, Baron Charles Hugel, "He was full of vigour, he possessed a wonderful dynamo within, which generated boundless energy and magnetism and gave him an air of confidence, courage and determination."

He was fond of hunting. He organized hunting expeditions frequently and awarded

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prizes to those who had shown grit while killing wild animals. In the words of Captain Burnes "There are few Asiatic, brave than the Sikhs."

It was because he was punctilious in his habits that he rode in the morning and evening at fixed hours. One day in the morning the Maharaja was witnessing the parade along with the Governor-General at Ropar when the time of his breakfast approached. He at once left everyone, had his breakfast, came back and he sat again near the Governor-General. Munshi Shahmat Ali Khan visited the Maharaja's court in 1837 CE. He mentions in his treatise, '*Sikhs and Afghans*' about the habits of the Maharaja. He says, "Ranjit Singh is habitually an early riser after attending to nature's call and ablutions, he goes out to have fresh air, usually on horse-back, but never sitting in palanquin. Whether it is dust storm or rain, summer or winter, the Maharaja must go daily without break for his morning outing. After morning walk, the Maharaja takes a quick breakfast then he holds his court which normally continues upto 12'O clock." During the morning Darbar, he listens to reports of officers of different departments and dictates orders to them. Later he takes his lunch and relaxes for some time. Then for one and half hour, he listens to the recitation of Guru Granth Sahib. During noon, the Maharaja often feeds grains to pigeons, falcons or strolls in the garden in the fort. Being free from that, he turns again to official work. In the evening the Maharaja goes out for a walk or ride. Usually at this time, he inspects troops on parade.[3] He is always regular and punctual, the only discretion he allowed himself and which undoubtedly impaired his health was alcohol and, in later life, laudanum in larger and larger doses.[4] Ranjit Singh's first recorded illness was in 1816 CE. On his return from a holy dip in the tank of Katas, he was seized with loathsome disease brought on by his own discretion which constrained him to remain on the bank of river Jehlum until he recovered.

Ranjit Singh's first serious ailment was in the summer of 1826 when he had a virulent attack of malaria. On Faquir Aziz-ud-din's advice, he sent for Dr. Murray from Ludhiana. He treated him for seven months. By the winter of 1826, he had recovered completely.[5] Thereafter, he led an active vigorous life spending four and five hours in the saddle and doing variegated administrative activities. According to court diarists, he continued to enjoy good health for the next nine years.

On the night of 17th August, 1835, Ranjit Singh had a mild stroke, which paralyzed the right side of his face which affected his power of speech. For his treatment, Dr. W.L. Mcgregor was summoned to attend on him. The doctor reported to Wade, then resident of Ludhiana, in the following words, "The Maharaja retired to rest in chamber where his body was freely exposed to a free circulation of cool air, the body being at the time in rather a profuse state of perspiration. In the middle of the night, he woke suddenly and found himself unable to move his tongue so as to articulate and his

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mouth distorted to a considerable degree. His attendants were alarmed at these symptoms and various remedies chiefly aromatics were prescribed by Faqir Aziz-ud-din. By the end of these, the Maharaja was soon able to articulate a little"[6] The Maharaja was soon in high spirits, as it was his wont. Perhaps such demeanor was due to his faith in tenth Guru's dictum that the Khalsa is he who is ever ready to face any calamity calmly and boldly.

According to McGregor he was not a good patient. He consulted a number of physicians, even lent willing ears to quacks who promised miraculous cures. He was diffident to take western medicines as also to consult foreign doctors. Dr. McGregor whom Lahore Durbar specially called for his treatment had to face a lot of difficulty while treating him. After great hesitation the Maharaja agreed to undergo electric treatment by McGregor. The treatment did considerably well but, after having a few shocks, he refused to get more.

In fact he never took disease seriously. He never changed his wayward habits and rarely agreed to change his daily routine. Dr. McGregor had to exert a lot in treating him. Even after a night disturbed by high fever he would go out for a walk in the morning in his palanquin either to the river or some orchard. On his return, he attended Durbar to hear petitions and news writer's reports and gave orders. He stopped work only when he was completely exhausted or seized with another bout of fever.

Baron Hugel met Ranjit Singh in 1836. He found the Maharaja bowed by disease and his speech was not clear. He seemed to feel old and exhausted.[7] Early in 1837, he had a second stroke of paralysis.[8] This time the whole of his right side was affected and its effect persisted for about six months. Thereafter, he was not the same person, ever agile ever full of strength. He could not scout a horse on his own; he had to seek help from others to lift himself into the saddle.[9] On 24th July 1838, he was out taking the morning walk when an elephant which had run amock attacked his palanquins. The litter-bearers and the guards fled away. The Maharaja could not get out of the palanquin and he was saved from being trampled to death by Attar Singh Sandhawalia who attacked the elephant with his sword so strongly that it had to run away.[10]

The year 1838 was a crucial year in the life of the Maharaja. Lord Auckland, the Governor General of India was sounded by the Home Government to persuade Ranjit Singh to agree to their proposals and stipulations in connection with their policies vis-à-vis Afghanistan and Sind. Accordingly, Auckland proceeded to achieve that end. In April-May, 1838, he had a personal meeting with the Sikh deputation at Simla and told them firmly that Ferozepur was a British territory and it could be used as a starting point by the British army to proceed towards Afghanistan. In May-June 1838, the Governor General sent a special mission to Lahore to conclude the Tripartite Treaty between Shah Shuja-ul-Malak, Ranjit Singh and the British. Ranjit Singh had

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to agree although hesitatingly and certainly not happily because he found it more favourable to the British than to himself. Rather on, the other hand, he would have to supply logistical support to the British in terms of supply of provisions and military forces. In the course of negotiations, he hinted that Shikarpur was British territory. The Maharaja felt much upset because Shikarpur was a trade centre and could serve a strategic point to exert influence on Sind politics.

Lord Auckland stayed in the Punjab for 36 days.[11] On 26 November, Maharaja reached Ferozepur to have a meeting with Auckland. Gifts were exchanged. Both sides praised each other. On 11-16 December, 1838, Auckland reached Amritsar, paid visit to Hari Mandir and made offerings. Maharaja also did so. Lord Auckland reached Lahore on 19-30 December, 1838. Almost daily from 2nd November to 16 December, 1838 there were festivities in which wine on large scale was served, dances were arranged and presents on a large scale were exchanged. Negotiations were also carried on. Ultimately, Auckland succeeded to get promise from the Maharaja that he would support Shah Shuja in securing his lost throne with the assistance of the British, besides supplying war material and logistical support. The British insisted that a British resident should be allowed to live at Lahore permanently. At this point, Maharaja's response was palpably negative.

During all these days, the Maharaja had to undergo a lot of strain, both mental and physical. He lost emotional sobriety. His health which was not already good as he had not completely recovered from the paralytic attack in 1835, further deteriorated. The stroke at Ferozepur completely deprived the Maharaja of his power of speech and he had to communicate by signs. The only courtiers to comprehend sign language were Bhai Ram Singh and Faqir-Aziz-ud-din. To catch the words, the Faqir would put his ears close to Ranjit Singh's mouth. If Maharaja understood, he expressed joy exclaiming 'eyosh'. If he did not, he shook his head and admitted humbly; *Nami Fahmah* 'I did not follow'.

On 31 December, 1838, Lord Auckland called on him to bid farewell to the Maharaja. At that time, the Maharaja was lying in bed unable to speak even a single word or to move an inch. When the Governor General offered him a Jewel as a parting gift, "his eyes lighted up with all its wonted fire in acknowledgement. It appeared even to a casual observer that Maharaja's days were numbered."[12] According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "Had there been no visit by Lord Auckland. Ranjit Singh could have lingered on for two or three years more. Perhaps, the visit was deliberately arranged to bring an early death of Maharaja."

Shortly after the visit of Auckland, Ranjit Singh developed a rasping cough. His spirits were further dampened by the death of his friend M. Allard on the north-west frontier. The weather became milder in Feb, 1939. His health slightly improved and

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he began to summon courtiers to his bedside. The Maharaja went to Amritsar to pray for health. He gave away large sums of money in charity. Cows with gilded horns, elephants with gold and silver Howdahs, images of gold and silver were given away mostly to the Brahmins. By the month of March, Maharaja looked better as regards health but there was no real improvement and once more the British agent at Ludhiana was approached to send Dr. Murray and Dr. Steele to Lahore. Dr. Steele made thorough examination of the Maharaja for a week and dispatched a confidential report to the Governor-General in which he averred that there was not much hope of his survival. He may only live for a short period, for a few months or even a year but the latter period is improbable.

At dawn of Sunday 23 June, the Maharaja gained consciousness and hopes stirred that the Maharaja would live. *Sankalaps* were performed and charities amounting to twenty *lacs* rupees were distributed on the following two days. Besides coins, cows with gilded horns, elephants, money and clothes were given to the Brahmins and the poor. The sultry weather rendered Maharaja more restless and in that state, he invited fifty Brahmins to pray for his recovery. Faqir Nur-ud-din was instructed to distribute ten maunds of bread to the poor everyday and large numbers of cows, horses and elephants along with a large quantity of gold and silver were sent to temples and given to holy men. Besides he donated things worth 30 *lacs* to the gurdwara at Nander in the Deccan.[13]

By June 1839, the Maharaja had six European doctors, three sent by Governor-General and three of his own, besides a large numbers of *Hakims* and *vaids*.[14] He preferred to take medicines given by Homeopath Dr. Martin Honigberger. He was advised by him to move to the fort where the air was more salubrious. The astrologers whom the Maharaja consulted forbade him to do so till June 13, 1839. As decided, the Maharaja was taken into the fort on that date. According to *Lahore Akhbar* he entered the fort after sunset in his palanquin and entering the wall of city, there was a salute of guns and volleys from the regiments at Anarkalee. The Maharaja, in order to invoke the grace of the Guru, ordered that the poor should be given donates liberally. In the evening of 13th June, 1839, he felt pain now and then in his eyes. Next morning, a general proclamation was issued to officers in the various cities enjoining them to see that slaughter of animals – goats, sheep *et al* in his kingdom be stopped forth with.[15]

On June 14, 1839, he developed palpitation of heart and on Faqir Nur-ud-din's advice he put agate on his person which was prepared from two mashes of green stones called *Sabza* ground down in millions of tears. Even this medication did not produce any result. In the early hours of the 20th June, 1839, the Maharaja was again seized with fever and had a discharge of blood from his nose. At this juncture, the

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Maharaja consulted astrologers. At the suggestion of Pandit Madhusudan, a reputed astrologer, the Maharaja increased the quantity of feed for the horses. Maharaja's health did not improve. On the advice of Faqir-Az-ud-din, he decided to entrust the Government to Kharak Singh with Dhian Singh as his chief minister. Later in the day, Kharak Singh held a Durbar at Masammun Burj where the proclamation of succession drafted by Faqir-Aziz-ud-din was read out.

Dhian Singh was invested with the sonorous title of *Naibus-Salatnat-i-Azamat, Khair-khwah-i-Samimi-i-Daulati Sirkar-i-Kubra, Wazir-i-Azam, Dastur-i-Mu`azzam, Mukh tar-i-Mulk.*, (Dhian Singh Bahadur the second in the great kingdom, the sincere well wisher of great prosperity, the principal minister, the chief Wazir, the omnipresent manager, Dhian Singh.)

Next day, on the eve of 22nd June, 1839, the Maharaja had a relapse while in court. He lay down in his bed and no one was allowed to speak. The Maharaja was laid down on the floor to die in the lap of mother earth. There was still some fire in his frail body and despite prognostication of medical experts that he would last for a few hours, he rallied and was put back on his bed. But his condition continued to deteriorate. On the afternoon of the 24th June, 1839, he had another stroke. Altogether despaired, he ordered his treasures and Jewels to be brought forth.

That happened in the morning of the 26th June 1839. As per his wish, cows with gilded horns, one hundred caparisoned horses and five of his best breeds such as Kubootrah, Nandhuree, the Nageena and others, four elephants with gold and silver Howdahs, a golden chair and bedsteads, plates, strings of hearts, swords, the genes and numerable other valuables were given as donations to sacred Hindu temples. The value of gifts given on these days stood about Rs 2 *crore*. The same day, the Maharaja ordered that the famous diamonds Koh-i-Noor be sent to the temple of Jagan Nath at Puri or the Golden Temple Amritsar.[16] This wish of the Maharaja was not carried out. The Lahore diarist Sohan Lal reports: By a sign the Sarkar pointed out that its diamond Sankalp should be made and it should be sent to Sri Jagan Nath Ji. Bhai Gobind Ram replied that Sarkar had ordered Dhian Singh to do so but Dhian Singh averred that Kanwar Kharak Singh be ordered to do that. Thereupon, the order was issued to Kanwar Kharak Singh who stated that Koh-i-Noor was with Misser Beli Ram. Khushhal Singh spoke to Beli Ram for its presentation who put forth excuses and replied that it was in Amritsar. Mutual discussion between the chiefs was within the hearing of the dying Maharaja. Wrinkles appeared on his forehead, a sign of disapproval. But he could not pursue his design because of his frailty and incapacity to assert.

Later on June, 1839, the Maharaja lost consciousness. Kharak Singh held a special Durbar. Sitting in the presence of the Maharaja, Kharak Singh conferred his father's

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grants to the estate-holders, ministers and senior officials made overtures of mutual concord. The ministers very solemnly expressed that they would observe unanimity, similar to that of British council for the safety of the state and preservation of Kharak Singh and Nau Nihal Singh's rights from foreign encroachments. Dhian Singh who kept silence all the time declared, in a tune of defiance 'who will dare to look at us with an unfriendly eye?[17] All hope of recovery was abandoned. Dhian Singh ordered the carpenters to prepare a bier costing about Rs. 5000/-. The end came in the evening of 27th June, 1839, "When the day had passed three quarters and three hours, records the Lahore Diarist "he bade farewell to this mortal world and got transferred to everlasting universe." The *Lahore Akhbar* described last scene vividly: "The demise of the Maharaja being known, the Ranees, Kanwar Kharak Singh, Dhian Singh, Jamadar Khushhal Singh and others raised their voices in lamentation. They tore their hair, cast dust on their head, and threw themselves on the ground. Every now and then, looking towards the dead body, their shrieks were shriller." During the night the body of the Maharaja lay in state on the floor with oil lamps burning on all sides. All night the wailing continued. Recitation from sacred texts went on.

On 28th June, the dead body of the Maharaja was placed on a Chauki. His body was thoroughly bathed in the water of the Ganges. He was dressed in a new suit of clothes. He was placed on the bier of Sandal wood, adorned with flowers of gold. Four Ranis, Rani Guddan, daughter of Sansar Chand of Katoch of Kangra, Har Devi, daughter of Mian Padam Singh of Nurpur, Raj Kaur, daughter of Jai Singh of Chainpur near Amritsar and Ishar Kaur, resolved to immolate themselves as Sati. Kharak Singh spared no effort to dissuade them from their resolve but they refused to respond. Their seven maid servants were also determined to immolate themselves along with them. Rani Guddan thought of the most appropriate to obtain an oath of loyalty and fidelity to the state. She took Dhian Singh's hand, placed it on the chest of the dead body of the Maharaja and made him swear never to betray Kharak Singh and his son Nau Nihal Singh, and always to be dedicated to the welfare of the state.

Ministers and courtiers paid their last homage by placing shawls on him. The funeral procession left the fort. Rani Guddan, the principal mourner came out of the palace into the large courtyard barefoot and unveiled for the first time in life. She slowly advanced towards the royal body. Two or three steps in front of her, a man was moving in the backward direction with his face towards the Rani. He was showing her a looking glass to enable her to see her face that it bore no sign of any grief or sorrow. Every now and then, the Rani took off a bangle, a necklace or an earring and flung it into the midst of beggars or the Brahmins chanting *Mantras*. The cortege passed through narrow streets of the city crammed with wailing people. The cortege then reached the

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garden (Hazuri Bagh) at the wall of the fort, close to the site of Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom. The scene was graphically described by a news writer in the following words:

> "Having arrived at the funeral pyre made of sandalwood, the corpse was placed upon it. Rani Guddan sat down by its side and placed the head of the deceased on her lap; while the other ranis with seven slave girls seated themselves around – with every mark of satisfaction on their countenances. The last prayers were said by members of all communities, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Brahmins performed their prayers from the Shastras; Sikh priests recited passages from the Granth Sahib; and Mussalmans accompanied them with their 'Ya Allah, Ya Allah'. The prayers lasted nearly an hour. 'At the time fixed by the Brahmins, Kunwar Khurruck Singh set fire to the pile and the ruler of the Punjab with four ranees and seven slave girls was reduced to ashes. A small cloud appeared in the sky over the burning pile and having shed a few drops cleared away. No one saw a hope of relief but in resignation. Raja Dhian Singh attempted four times to jump into the burning pile, but was withheld by the multitude.....[18] The heart is rent in attempting a description of the distress and lamentations in the palace amongst the ranees and amongst the citizens of every age, sex and religion."

"The consuming of his pile occupied two days, writes Honigberger. On the third day, some of the bones and ashes of each of the bodies were collected in the presence of the Court and placed in urns." The citizens of Lahore in hordes paid their final farewell to the ashes of their beloved monarch and his consorts..... upon the arrival of the procession outside Delhi Gate; a final and profuse royal salute was given by booming of canons from the fort and ramparts of the city. The whole of the Punjab plunged into unspeakable mourning and grief not only over the passing of a much beloved king, but over the passing of the dream and a hope. Dumb-founded people were left only with a past, not future. The urns full of ashes were placed in palanquins of gold. Kharak Singh, Dhian Singh and Khushhal Singh accompanied them to Hardwar to immerse them in the Ganges. All along the 300 miles route, people came to pay their homage. On the arrival of the ashes at Amritsar, merchants and dignitaries of the city placed *doshalas* over them as a mark of their respect. At Ludhiana, a warm reception was accorded by firing canons and placing *doshalas* on the urns. At Patiala, Maharaja Karam Singh received them by placing gold coins and shawls over these. At Ambala, Jagadhri and Saharanpur, people bade hearty farewell by showering flowers and covering the urns with shawls.

Ranjit Singh was dead - the man was like Soloman precise in perception, prompt to design appropriate action. He was a great conqueror, consolidator and integrator. He found a rabble, divided by tribe, clans, ethnicities, religions *et al* and welded them into a nation, such as the Gurus had envisaged. He brought peace and prosperity to all people in his kingdom. He augured a new brand of monarchy. He did not claim to

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hold despotic sway of the traditional monarch. He was in some sense an elected chief and, like Augustus Caesar, he was careful never to push his pretensions too far. He never acted out of vengeance and took no life all through his hazardous career of half a century, except in battles. He never lost emotional sobriety in defeat or success. He brought together under a single flag of the Sikhs, Khalsa men and women of all castes and creeds as it was cherished right from the inception of Khalsa faith.

He was a statesman par excellence and was honoured and admired by the rulers of Europe as well as by the rulers of Asia and his fellow princes in India. He was a unique warrior of history whose life in spite of all its shortcomings was a model of compassion, integrity, liberal outlook and humanizing. He was in line with Alexander and Napoleon. As an integrator, he was no less than Bismarck and Guribaldi and, as a man of devotion and munificence, he was like Hatamtai of ancient lore. For the first time in thousand years of Indian history, he turned the tide of foreign invasions finally and took the fight into their very home. He administered his vast kingdom in such way that its each segment was satisfied. Even the habitually warring people such as Khataks, Yusafzais and many of others like them then in the area beyond Attock up to Khailier were reconciled to his regime. He took steps to promote domestic and foreign trade, manufacturing by providing facilities in terms of different fiscal concessions, safety and security of their wherewithals. In spite of possessing a bouquet of sterling qualities, he was humble to the core, always considering himself nothing but a *Nagara* (war drum) of Guru Gobind Singh, the victory or success not being his but of the peoples or the Gurus. The final exit of such a man from the world created a void unlikely to be filled shortly.

None of his successors were capable enough to take care of the rich legacy which was bequeathed to them by Ranjit Singh. Soon after Maharaja's death, started period of intrigues, killings, seditions, conspiracies, scramble for power for narrow interests and, in the process, no one in Lahore Durbar felt abashed and ashamed to enter into collusive alliance with the British to seek diplomatic as well as military help to consummate their evil designs. The end result was that the vast expanse of the Sikh kingdom was annexed and made part of the British Empire of India.

Many bold initiatives taken by Ranjit Singh were hit hard. The Lahore Durbar had initiated processes leading to the galvanisation of diverse people of the Punjab into a compact Punjabi nation, but these suffered a halt. The growing harmony among different segments of people was not allowed to culminate because of the divisive policy of the British colonial government. The Punjabi economy's graph slided down because of the British Government's intention to make it an appendage of the British economic interests. The Punjabi youth's spirit of adventure and his penchant to look forward got debilitated. The flowering of distinct art forms in literature, painting and

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architecture met a set-back under the impact of the colonial world-view and the discriminative policies of its sponsors.

What a pity it was! How accused were all those, who were responsible for such a deluge. Punjab entered a new phase, now of dependence, of inter-religious rivalries and conflicts, of ethos of inter-community hatred, of schism of soul ultimately causing its vivisection into two parts, Pakistani Punjab and Hindustani Punjab.

– Principal Surjit Singh Gandhi

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12. Khushwant Singh., *op. cit.*, p. 258.
13. Hari Ram Gupta, p. 533.
14. Khushwant Singh *op. cit.*, p. 259.
15. Gopal Singh, *History of Sikh People*, p. 501.+
16. Ibid, p. 501.
17. Khushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 259-60.
18. As the custom of Sati was condemned by the Sikh Gurus, it was only the Ranies from the Hindu Homes in the hill areas and their maid-servants who performed the rite in accordance with their religious beliefs. According to Osborne "everything was done to prevent it, but in vain. They were guaranteed in their ranks and in their possessions, but they insisted upon it." No Sikh Rani or maid-servant committed this act, nor were they compelled to do so, although Ranjit Singh had 21 regular wives. It is said that Dhian Singh overwhelmed by grief tried many a time to plunge into the funeral pyre, but was prevailed by friends and Kharak Singh. Some eyewitness accounts say this was only a farce being enacted by the Raja to display his loyalty to the dead chief (See Carmicheal Smythes' '*History of the reigning family of Lahore.*'
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PART II

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18. As the cremation of Sati was condemned by the Sikh Gurus, it was only the Ranies from the Hindu Houses in the hill areas and their maid-servants who performed the rite in accordance with their religious beliefs. According to Gangaram "everything was done to prevent it, but in vain. They were guarded in their tanks and in their possessions, but they heaved upon it." No Sikh Rani or maid-servant committed this act, nor were they compelled to do so, although Ranjit Singh had 24 regular wives. It is said that Dhian Singh overwhelmed by grief, tried many times to plunge into the funeral pyre, but was prevented by Friends and Khazak Singh. Some accounts however say this was only a facade, actuated by the Rani to display his loyalty to the dead chief. (See Carmichael Smyth's *"History of the reigning family of Lahore"*.

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CIVIL ADMINISTRATION OF PUNJAB UNDER THE LAHORE DARBAR (1800-1849)

The area of the Sikh empire was about one *lakh* and forty thousand square miles. In the North, it touched Ladakh and Iskardu, in the North-West it extended to the confines of Mount Sulleiman and the Khyber Pass. In the East, it included Phillaur and, in the South, along the right bank of the river Sutlej, it stretched upto the Sind province. There were several territories, though not very significant, in the cis-Sutlej area also.[1]

System of Administration

This extensive stretch of the territory, was not, of course, wholly under the direct rule of the Maharaja, as due to the exigencies of the situation, he had allowed most of the local Chiefs to continue to rule over their former territories. They paid an annual tribute to the Maharaja in recognition of his overlordship.

The entire kingdom was divided into four *subas* (provinces). Each province was divided into *parganas, taluqas* and *mauzas*, districts, subdivisions and groups of villages. Maharaja Ranjit Singh possessed a great talent for evolving new systems to administer his territories. These changed as his kingdom had grown. He had inherited the simple system of administration of the *Misldar Sardars* whose holdings were small and scattered. Eventually, he adapted the Mughal system of administration with its terminologies, as his needs dictated. The Maharaja was the fountainhead of all authority. The administrative headquarters of his kingdom, the Central Secretariat was located in the Royal Palace and the Fort at Lahore. It was known as the Lahore Darbar. The Secretariat had twelve or fifteen branches or Daftars.[2] The head of each *Daftar* was called *Diwan* (adviser). His work was over-seen by a *Wazir* (Minister).

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There was also the office of the Chief-Wazir, a post which was held for most of the time by Dogra Mian Dhyan Singh, who enjoyed the title of *Raja-e-Rajgan* – the Raja of Rajas.

Nazim (Governor) was the head of a province. Under him was *Kardar* (district officer) followed by *Muqaddams, Kanungos, Zaildars* and *Chaudhris*. The lowest official of the State was a *Chowkidar*.

All the servants of the state worked under the direction of the Maharaja. He kept a close watch on their working which was regularly subjected to strict scrutiny. However, he only interfered in the working of his machinery when it became absolutely necessary. The Tributary Chiefs were not exempt from this routine and checks of the Darbar, either.

The Darbar was normally held in the *baradari* – a building with 12 arches which kept the place well-supplied with fresh air and light. Sometimes it was held in the open also. Two sittings were held in a day with a break during the noon. Emergency Darbar was sometimes also held in the night to deal with suddenly arisen problems. It was held in the private chambers of the Maharaja when admission was restricted to the specialists and trusted courtiers only. Dogra Dhyan Singh was so much trusted by the Maharaja that he was consulted alone, in the inner apartments of the palace when there were subtle cases to be decided.[3] In the daily routine of life, Dhyan Singh was the principal officer of the State through whom all the petitions, applications, approaches and appointments had to be made. Each and every important document had to pass through his hands before it reached the Maharaja. With the Maharaja's orders it was returned to him, only, for compliance of these orders. Even the important *parwanas* (state orders) issued by the Maharaja passed through him.

Since there was no written administrative code in the Maharaja's Kingdom, and many a time, when he re-allotted duties to break official monopolies, certain Western writers, like H.L.O. Garret in his introduction to "Event at the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1810-1817"[4], have misconstrued this situation to suggest that his administrative measures were arbitrary. They forget that the British Constitution is un-written and, yet, Britain is known as the mother of parliaments.

With his phenomenal memory, when his holdings were small, the Maharaja used to administer through verbal orders only. In 1809 when his responsibilities grew, the Maharaja employed one of the best experts of his times, Bhiwani Das, a native of Peshawar who had been the Prime Councillor of the Amir of Kabul to streamline the Darbar's system of administration. He remained the principal administrative officer of the Maharaja. Fakir Azziz-ud-din who was intelligent, tactful and well-versed in the norms of diplomacy was the Maharaja's foreign minister. His brother Nur-ud-din possessed a vast knowledge of *Tibb-e-Unani*, the Greeck system of medicine. The

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Fakirs also acted as the personal physicians of the Maharaja and came so close to him that they had devised a secret code to communicate with their ruler.

"The language of the Cypher was unintelligible, which could only be deciphered by a key... It was kept carefully by Fakir Azziz-ud-din."[5]

The revenue administration was under the control of Diwans Bhawani Das and Dina Nath. Misrs Beli Ram, Jassa Mal, Lal Singh and Megh Raj were in charge of the *Tosha Khana* (Regalia).[6]

The royal *daak* (post) and Akhbar Nawises (news-chroniclers) were controlled by Rattan Chand Rishdaraz. He was appointed Postmaster General of Punjab when this new department was established during the period of Regency in 1846.

Bhai Ram Singh, Dogras Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh were some of the other influential courtiers. The *Darbaris* were considered the pillars of the State and the Maharaja heeded their advice. The Darbar was often influenced by the powerful barons of the State.

A complete official record of all the transaction of the Khalsa Darbar including the accounts, right from 1811 till 1848 – the closing year of the Sikh rule, were kept immaculately in the administrative *Toshakhana* (*Adna*) of the Lahore fort. They are all available today at the Punjab State Archives, Patiala. The language of these records is Persian and the calligraphy style is Shikasta. Every sheet in the file bears the name of the department to which it belonged, together with the name of the chief-officer of the department or the Darbar.

In the earlier days of the Maharaja's rule, the *Toshakhana* (*Bala*) or Regalia used to be in the Moti Bazaar of the Lahore city. Basti Ram was the treasurer then. Sarafs (dealers in gold) acted as the bankers of the Maharaja. They received all the payments due to the Kingdom of Lahore and rendered their accounts to the Darbar. Rama Nand Sahu of Amritsar had handled this office capably. His agent, Sukh Dial was also entrusted with the administration of Justice and the charge of the seal of the *munshigiri* on *ijar-i-dari*.

The State took over the administration of finances in 1816 CE. Two treasuries were maintained – one at Moti Mandir within the limits of the Lahore fort and the other at the Gobindgarh Fort in Amritsar.

Another keypost under Maharaja Ranjit Singh was that of the '*deorhi-bardar*' the Royal Chamberlain who held his office in the main gate of the Lahore fort. He acted as a medium and a security officer between the visitors and the Maharaja. Alongwith the dossier of the visitors, a diary of the daily happenings at the Darbar was also compiled by the chroniclers under the direction of the Chamberlain. Four volumes of such *Deorhi Akhbarats* can be seen at the Punjab State-Record office, Patiala. The Chamberlain was a very well paid job. Kushal Singh, who held the office for 15 years,

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was given an annual allowance of Rs. 40,000/-. Under Dogra Dhian Singh, it was raised to Rs. 60,000/-.

The Central Secretariat had the following departments:

1. Sarishta-i-Hazur
2. Daftar Devi Das
3. Naql Daftar
4. Sarishta-i-Diwani
5. Sarishta-i-Bhiwani Dass
6. General Secretariat
7. Daftar Ganga Ram
8. Sarishta-i-Daftar
9. Daftar Toshakhana
10. The Tenth Daftar
11. Daftar-i-Shahzada
12. Daftar-i-Daroga
13. Daftar-i-Roznamcha
14. Daftar-i-Moharyani
15. Daftar-i-Khas
16. Daftar-i-Mualla

Experts and ministers of the Maharaja were sent out on regular tours with instructions to assess revenues, inspect *Thanas* and the work of the *Nazims, Kardars* and other field officers. They were also deputed to study the conditions of the inhabitants and suggest measures for their welfare.

The Maharaja was mostly in the field, some times incognito also supervising the work of everyone. He took special pains to listen to the complaints of the common people and redressed their grievances on the spot.

The Maharaja expected a very high standard of performance from his employees. Immediately after selection, an employee was put on an allowance and tested through deployment on arduous tasks. Pay and perks were fixed only after a person had proved his worth.

Those found lacking in their work were posted to out-of-the-way places and on unimportant job. If they failed to reform, they could be fined or even dismissed from service. For heinous acts they could also be jailed. The Maharaja established a centrally administered Sikh empire which he ran with rare sagacity. Whatever land he conquered, he created therein a viable administrative unit.[8]

At his Court, limited persons were provided with chairs, other courtiers either kept standing or sat on the carpets. It was customary with him to dictate orders on important cases, at night, from his sleeping Chamber after he had collected relevant information from his diwans.

Provincial, City and Village Administration

Nazim: The *Nazim* (Governor) held a province on the basis of *ijara-i-dari*. He was the chief collector of revenue, the chief judge and the chief, also of the military cantonments (*deras*) located in his areas. He was a petty potentate working under the overall authority of the Darbar and the Maharaja.

The foremost duty of the Nazim was to maintain perfect peace and order. His

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next important duty was to inspect revenue statistics of the province, keep control over administrative and judicial setup of his territory, keep a close watch on the work of the *Kardars* working under him.

All intricate and important cases, particularly those relating to criminal offences and serious disturbances which could not be handled by his subordinates were passed on to him for taking action.[9]

The Nazim was allowed to adjust the amount spent by him on State liabilities against the *qisht* (instalments) of his *ijara*. Of this transaction, he had to send a regular account to the Darbar. The Maharaja was very liberal. He settled the amount of the *ijara* periodically according to the fertility of the land and other sources of income.[10]

In cases of complaints from the citizens or reports pertaining to mal-administration in his territory, the *Nazim* was held solely responsible by the Maharaja. If charges against him proved correct, he could be fined, dismissed and in extreme cases of misdemeanour, even imprisoned. Private individuals, the sepoys in the area and *akhbar nawises* (news writers) constantly kept the Maharaja informed of public grievances against the Nazims whose duty it was to ensure that the peasants prospered and that the poor and the weak were not in trouble.

However, strictness prevailed in provinces like Kashmir and Peshawar where people were habitually turbulent law-breakers. Hari Singh Nalwa and Avitabile, who were mostly given charge of these provinces, ruled with an iron hand. But even they were not spared if they crossed decent limits. When Ghulam Muhi-ud-din, the Nazim of Kashmir, did not refrain from extorting money from the people, the Maharaja, squeezed him of his assets to the maximum limit to teach him a lesson.[11]

The main offices dealing with the provincial affairs functioned at the headquarters of the Nazims. These were situated at Multan, Peshawar, Srinagar and Lahore.

Kardar: Next to and below the *Nazim* was a *Kardar* who was the executive officer of a *Parganna* or a district.[13] *Kardar* was employed on the basis of the load of work and not the extent of the territory. He had clear cut orders to deal with the common people amicably and administer justice without prejudice of any kind and true to the word of the law. The scale of revenue and other payments were periodically fixed by the Darbar, and the *Kardar* was not allowed to extort any more money from the people than the amount that had been fixed by his superiors. While administering justice, he was expected to give utmost protection to the common people of his *Taluqa*. He had to keep a watchful eye on the bad characters within his jurisdiction in order to stop crime. He was required to send a bi-monthly statement of the crimes which had taken place in his *pargana* to the *Nazim* which eventually went to the Darbar. The *Kardar* also ensured safe travelling by keeping the roads free of bandits. Being the chief law and order and judicial officer he was required to keep proper

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control over inefficient and corrupt judiciary and police within the limits of his jurisdiction. The Khalsa (the centrally-owned lands) were also administered by the *Kardar*. For the performance of this duty he was supplied with sepoys and *moharirs* (assistants) while on tour.

Kotwal: It was a hereditary office.[15] His official establishment was called a Kotwali and his jurisdiction extended throughout the *Taluqa*. He performed fiscal, maintenance of law and order and military duties. In the rural areas, he was deemed to be the agricultural chief of a number of villages grouped together in general likeness. In the cities, he was the Chief Police Officer, held responsible for law and order.

The *Kotwal* also acted as a pleader before the government if people so desired.[16] He was a spokesman on their behalf, a peace maker in their quarrels and an umpire for settling party fueds. In political crises, his proceedings and judgments were considered valid.

Daroga-i-Adalat: His job was similar to that of a *Kotwal*. His income depended on the earnings that construed from holding a Court. In times of danger, emergencies and feuds, he was called upon to bring normalcy.

Thanedar and Qiladar: He combined the duties of police as well as a military officer. Military personnel could be ordered to render police duties at the times of disturbances or clashes in the cities also.[17] It was under the Regency, after the 1st Anglo Sikh War that a military code was prepared and the nature of cases in the judicial department differentiated.[18]

Chaudhri: In the rural areas, he was an agriculture officer having jurisdiction over eight or ten villages.[19] He was expected to increase agriculture yield and replace absconding peasants. In the cities, the *Chaudhris* were referees in respect of *Mohalladari* problems. They were entrusted to settle minor disputes and check crimes.

Zailadar, Qanungo, Muqaddam, Patwari, Chowkidar

A *Taluqa* was divided into several *zails*. The *Zaildar* kept the state informed about the workings of the civil servants in their areas.

Qanungo maintained the records of the revenue payable by the villages to the State. *Muqaddam* (headman) was considered to be a servant of the village society. *Patwari* and *Chowkidar* worked under the *Muqaddam*. *Patwaris* collected the revenues and kept accounts. *Chowkidars* performed the watch and ward duties.

Jagirat System: *Jagirdar* wielded autonomous powers. He collected revenues, levied customs and dispensed justice.[20] *Jagirdars* were normally non-resident and they often appointed their agents called *Hakims* to administer their *jagirs* which were held for life-time and lapsed to the state after the death of the individuals. In deserving cases, they were renewed to the heirs after payment of fees and *nazranas*.[21]

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In case of good management, the grant of the land of the *jagir* was increased. Badly managed *jagirs* were fined or even cancelled.

The Maharaja, with the help of the local leading personalities of the concerned areas, kept a personal check on the working of the *jagirs*.

Types of Grants Given to the Jagirdars

Mainly, there were three types of grants:

i) Service Grants (ii) Personal Grants and (iii) Religious Grants. These were further sub-divided into different categories.

Amongst the personal grants, the most frequent were the military and the civil grants bestowed in lieu of salaries due to individuals. The next were the feudal and household grants bestowed on the feudatories and the grandees of the principalities who supplied soldiers for the army. Grants to the State prisoners who mostly comprised recalcitrant members of the royal household fallen out of royal grace were given as the maintenance allowance. Grants were also given to the families of deceased soldiers, chiefs and other loyal servants of the state. *Inams* (prizes) and *tahaifs* (presents) were given for meritorious service.

The religious grants were called *mafi* or *dharamarth* (charity) grants. They were given to religious institutions of all denominations and devout men. Pensions granted to the widows of the deceased servants were known as *Inglis*. Daily allowances sanctioned to needy and deserving people were called *rozina daran*. Gifts given to the servants at the time of marriages in the family were called *tambol*.

Daroga-i-Sada Barat was appointed to run free kitchen for the poor where free meals were supplied twice a day.[23]

Judicial Administration

The Lowest Court

The Panches and the Panchayats in the villages and the *Chaudhris* of the *Mohallas* in the cities formed the lowest courts in the Maharaja's kingdom. They performed their duties so efficiently that they were employed by the British after the annexation of the Punjab to formulate the Civil Code of justice. Most cases of justice at the lower level were disposed off by the Panches and the *Chaudhris* in efficient and extremely satisfactory manner.[24] Revenue cases at the lowest level were referred to the Patwaris.

The *Muqddams*, *Qanungos*, *Kardars*, *Nazims* and *Adaltis* also enjoyed judicial authority. The *Qazis* in the cities exercised powers of judicial court. At the centre under the direct authority of the Maharaja was the Chief Court at Lahore. Cases were decided according to the social customs, tenets of Hindu Law in case of the Hindus

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and the Quranic Law in the case of the Muslims. Like the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, who had installed a bell in the royal palace the Maharaja had also devised a method by which he could dispense justice directly and without any expense to such oppressed and the aggrieved poor people who were unable to engage *vakeels* (lawyers) and pay the court fees. He had a box fixed at an easily accessible place in his palace where anyone, at anytime could lodge a complaint. Of this box, he kept the key in his own possession. These petitions were examined by him every morning and quick judgments were dictated on the spot.

And the Maharaja's orders were as quickly implemented as they were given. In the Maharaja's kingdom, thus, there were ample openings for everyone even the lowest of his subjects to seek quick justice, even without investing any money.

On receiving petitions, he would make investigations, compare statements (verbal or written) and then decide cases on sheer merit.[25]

Munsiffs (arbitrators) called upon all witnesses to take oath by holding their sacred scriptures in their hands. The *vakeels* (lawyers) were respected for their forensic skills. The language of the court was Persian which was not understood by common people. Thus, sometimes, difficulties arose in explaining cases properly. Under such circumstances, power prevailed on the weak. Influence and bribery and false witnesses could be employed to weaken cases.[26]

The Maharaja would take full note of these activities of the influential people and decide cases without the help of middle-men and through personal enquires. Cases which did not yield to ordinary court procedures were decided by recourse to superstition or an ordeal. The system was known as *Dibb*.[27] The accused was made to place his fingers in boiling water or made to carry the ploughshare upto a long-distance. If he did not yield to the pain of burning or die due to the exhaustion of carrying weight, he was left unmolested.

Murder and Capital Punishment

So far as the Maharaja's Court was concerned, this punishment was never inflicted.[28] The cases of murder were compromised through payment of cash or transfer of a strip of arable land which was given as a compensation to the family of the deceased. At other times, the oppresser made a compromise by giving his daughter in marriage to the family of the deceased. The first compromise was known as *Khunbaha* and the latter as *Natdari*. Hari Singh Nalwa and the French Governor Avitable were the only two *Nazims* who are known to have inflicted capital punishment in the regions of north-west frontier where the cost of maintaining law and order was more than the revenue which was earned.

In cases of robberies, loss of commodities and theft of animals, the Chief of the

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area, if he was unable to trace the culprit, had to make good the losses suffered by the people, travellers and merchants. Cities of Lahore and Amritsar had *Adalats* which dispensed justice. Since this job was held on, *ijara-i-dari*, these *Adalats* tried to squeeze as much money as could be possible from the appellant. The Maharaja was aware of this commercialism in the system and was known to have intervened when matters in this respect needed amendment.

Sources of Revenue

The foundation of a State rests on its assets and liabilities. The Maharaja had inherited Punjab ravaged by the wars. He needed money to develop it into a prosperous kingdom. Threatened by enemies from all sides: the Afghans, the British and even the Marathas, he needed a strong and well-equipped army also. Therefore, in addition to land revenue, he levied many other taxes.

The Maharaja had a great regard for the merchant class as it contributed a large share to the state revenues and introduced unknown and important commodities in the State.[29]

Forty eight articles were taxed: 1) corn, 2) white cloth or silk, 3) pashmina, 4) pashaum (both qualities of very fine wool), 5) raw and coloured silk, 6) indigo, 7) *kariana* (miscellaneous) goods, 8) sugar, 9) *kiram* (dye for silk), 10) mollases, 11) blankets, 12) *fitkari* (alum), 13) dry fruits, 14) *mujeeth*, 15) metals, 16) *tungar* herbs and dye (hill products), 17) *ghee*, 18) *munyaree* (glass ware), 19) vegetables (duty on thirteen vegetables was abolished later), 20) tobacco and *charas*, 21) revenue on government lands, 22) excise on spirituous liqueur, 23) butcharies, 24) horses, 25) fuel, 26) mints of silver coins, 27) mints of copper coins, 28) manufacture of gold leaf, 29) gold and silver thread, 30) sale of real estate, 31) motifs of gold and silver used for embroidery, 32) brick kilns, 33) paper, 34) salt, 35) *dhart* (discount or fee) on the sale of bazaar commodities, 36) sale of pearls, 37) gambling, 38) sale of fans, 39) cloth manufactured in Punjab, 40) white zira and *sooji*, 41) raw cotton, 42) sale of goats, 43) Sale of timber, 44) *rasumat* (fees) from artisans and shop keepers, 45) tax on workers of salt mines, 46) capitation tax on goldsmiths crossing the Indus, 47) ferries, 48), tax, on salt mines.

"Gold is also found in the stream (Indus). It sells of Rs. 15/- per *tola* weight, of which Rs. 3/- is the government capitation tax."[30]

The manufacture and the sale of the salt was the monopoly of the state. This commodity fetched the largest revenue which was settled on contract basis. The wholesale price of the salt was Rs. 1½ per *maund* and retail price Rs. 2/ - per *maund*. Gulab Singh Dogra amassed a great fortune from the contract of the salt mines located at Khewra, which formed the world's largest rock salt deposits.

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Agha Abbas Shirazi who visited the salt mines in 1837 recorded that the State earned Rs. 25/- *lacs* annually from the sale of salt alone.[31]

Due to fine workmanship and excellent embroidery work, the Kashmir shawls had gained an international market. Because of the huge profits that the shawls yielded their sale was, also, monopolised by the State. The income from the tax on shawls which was levied at 42 custom houses spread all over the Kingdom totalled upto Rs. 12/- *lacs* p.a.[32]

An English emissary who visited Kashmir in 1833 had estimated that the Lahore Darbar received Rs. 18/- *lacs* per annum as net revenue, after adjusting all expenditure, from the manufacture of the shawls in Kashmir.[33]

Thus, the major sources of income of the Lahore Darbar were (i) *Taluqat* or (land revenue) (ii) *Sairat* (customs) (iii) *Wajudat* (excise), (iv) *Jagirats* (territories given on contract or rent basis).[34]

Irrigation

Both summer and winter monsoons bring rain in Punjab. The landmass is also intersected by perennial rivers and their tributaries. And where the river water does not reach, the level of sub-soil water is sufficiently high for digging wells for irrigation.

Peshawar Valley

Irrigation was done through canals and tributaries of the rivers. The landmass being rocky there were few wells. The most important river was the famous Indus, also known as Attock, Nilah or Abasin. Kabul river, called Darya-i-michni, Naghman and Lunda at various points of its course was the next important river. It had two significant tributaries – 'Adeyzai', which flowed towards the north of the river and 'Shah Alam' which flowed towards the south.[35]

Nine canals were cut from river Kabul which met at Jalalabad. These were called *nagar bar* or *noghta bar* in the local language. Ten inundation canals (*guzars)* were dug to carry flood waters of river Kabul into Indus.[36]

Multan

There was a network of 15 canals from the rivers Sutlej, Chenab and Ravi, which irrigated the Multan province.[37] These canals were divided into *wah, jhallar, lar* and *kassis. Wah* was a canal which flowed naturally due to gravity. In the *jhallar* the level of water was raised by using Persian wheels. *Lars* and *Kassies* were small channels carrying water to the villages. The *Nullahs* (seasonal ravines) which served as tributaries to the rivers during the monsoons were also channelised for irrigation. In Sarai-Sidhu, there were 72 such *Nullahs.*[38]

The sandy and desert landscape of the Multan *Nizamat* was, thus, turned into a veritable granary where people from other *Nizamats* used to rush to settle down.

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Jehlum Tract

Land being undulating and uneven, irrigation in this tract could only be carried out through the wells[39] or *silab* (marshy water or wetlands). Wells were classified into three groups. The first rate wells were paved with pucca bricks, where six to eight yokes irrigated 30 to 50 acres of land. Wells with four or five yokes, which irrigated 20-30 acres of land constituted the second category. Wells which had a capacity to irrigate less land than the second category came last in assessment.

Central Punjab

More irrigation was done through the wells than the canals. In the Lahore area, irrigation was done through Persian wheels attached to the wells, and by *jhallars*, when Persian wheels were run directly from streams and canals. Where the surface water of the rivers Ravi and Sutlej was close-by water was also drawn by *dhunkalis*. In this case a long pole was tied with heavy weight at one end and a bucket at the other. The bucket was thrown in the water, pole was swung backwards manually, the stroke lifted the bucket full of water and emptied it into the field.[40]

The oldest canal in the Lahore district was Khanwah dug during Akbar's reign. The next famous canal was Hasli or Shah Nehar dug from river Ravi at village Sadaur. It crossed two torrents, Jha and Chakki, then passed through Dina Nagar, Jhowur, Dharamkote and Majitha. From Majitha a branch line 10 miles in length was excavated to supply water to the sacred tank of the Darbar Sahib. The main canal then passed through Lahore and irrigated the famous Shalamar Garden. The canal was designed by Ali Merdan during the reign of Shahjehan. The country between Lahore and Amritsar was the heart of 'Majha' and very fertile. According to Maj. Leech, in addition to its canals, the area was irrigated by 347 wells.[41]

Gurdaspur *Pargana* was irrigated by a network of canals dug from river Chukki, its tributary Khal and the Jena canal. Jalandhar was irrigated through the ancient canal called Shah Nahar.[42]

Kangra

Its hill lands were irrigated through canals also. Near the place of cultivation narrow cuts were made in the *kools* (streams) which intersected this landmass by the dozens. Almost 15 to 20 canals were dug at different levels from these streams. Every village had its own code of rule for cutting channels.

The pargana of Haripur was the best irrigated because of its even surface and gradual slopes. Irrigation canals were drawn from the river Beas, the Ban-Ganga, the Diba and the Bul, which kept the land well-supplied with water.

Land Revenue Administration

As mentioned earlier, there were two types of land in the Maharaja's kingdom,

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i.e., i) *Khalsa* the Crown lands, ii) *Jagir* lands.

Land was classified according to variations in the soil and agricultural conditions. The revenue was realised according to the nature and the out turn of the crop. Land was measured and surveyed to fix the rates of revenue.

Type of soil: Land was classified under four groups: i) *Polaj*, alluvial worthy of producing annual crops, (ii) *Pranti* land which produced only periodical crops. It was such land as regained fertility after it was left fallow for a season, *Chhachher* or such poor land which yielded crops after being rested for 3 to 4 years. The lowest type of land was called *Banjar* land.[43] The following rates of revenue were charged from the proprietors and tillers of land in normal circumstances:

1) *Nayayi* or manured and fully irrigated land, Rs. 7/- per acre, (2) *Khara* a land irrigated with brackish water, Rs. 5 *annas* 8, (3) *Souslee* irrigated land, Rs. 4 annas 3 and (4) *Bhoor* irrigated land Rs. 2 *annas* 12 per acre. The per acre charge on unirrigated land was annas 14 only. The revenue was charged on: i) *Batai* or equal share system, (ii) on Cash, (iii) nuxed or *kankaut* system wherein from *kachakan* or *nazarandazi* a deduction called *Chet Sawai* was allowed on the remainder of *pucca-kan*, the government's share taken was ½ or $^2/_5$ or $^1/_3$ or ¼ according to the nature of the case (iv) *bigha* system (v) plough system or on well-basis.

The Maharaja eventually tried to enforce cash payment in lieu of the yield which did not succeed. *Kankaut* remained the best via-media. Border tribes were given concession in the assessment of land revenue.

Miscellaneous Taxes Under Land Revenue

Tirni or the Grazing Tax

In the central Jhang tract and the sout-west of the Maharaja's kingdom where there was abundance of cattle like the camels, horses and sheep and where land could not be cultivated due to desert condition, the ancient tradition of charging tax on grazing animals was continued by the Lahore Darbar also.[44]

The following annual rates of grazing tax were charged:

Female camel Rs. 2/-, male camel Rs. 1/-, milch buffalo Rs. 1/-, cow a *Annas* 6.

The officer in charge of this tax was called *Sadar Tirni Guzar*. He was empowered to make a new distribution list of the tax in the event of decrease or increase in the number of cattle due to migration, etc.

This tax was charged from cattle feeders only and not from the bonafide cultivators.

Tirni Dukan Tax

It was levied on the professional *karigars* (artisans) working at a shop at the rate

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of Rs. 1/- per annum by Sawan Mull in his Nizamat of Multan.

Revenue From Trees

The Date (Khajur) tree which grew on the Crown lands were a source of good income to the State. The fruit of the Khajur trees was assessed during June and July and sold through the brokers called *Bal Khars* at a fixed price annually.

Buha (House) Tax

A tax of Rs. 2/- per annum per house was levied on all citizens.

Khira (Fodder) Tax

One kanal (1/8 of an acre) of fodder per well was taken by the *Kardar* as his share of fodder to maintain state horses and other animals.

Laga (Transit) Duty

This tax was levied on commodities going out of or coming into villages or cities in the same manner as the octroi tax is charged these days.

Ruma Shumari (Poll Tax) on Sheep

This was charged from the breeders at the rate of Rs. 4/- *annas* 6/- per hundred heads, per year.

Welfare Services During Ravages

During the famines, the Maharaja ordered a portion of land revenue either to be reduced or even remitted. He fixed weekly rates for commodities and opened his stores to help the people with food stuffs, blankets and other amenities that were required.

Floods in the Indus and the onslaught by swarms of locust at least once in the Maharaja reign had ravaged the Maharaja's kingdom. Inundation canals were built in the Peshawar valley and the Nizamat of Multan to control these floods.

– Dr. N. K. Seth

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SALIENT FEATURES OF RANJIT SINGH'S ADMINISTRATION - AN ANALYSIS

While every notable figure in history has his own place, it is not everyone, who has contemporary relevance. Maharaja Ranjit Singh belongs to that rare breed of men who can be marked out as someone whose style and mode of governance, if studied in detail, can help us to find solutions to problems with which we are confronted today.

Two things make it possible to know much more about Ranjit Singh than about various other prominent figures of recent history. For one thing, he lived only about 200 years ago and some of the legends that grew up around him still survive. For another, there is considerable evidence in regard to what he set out to achieve and what he actually achieved. Precisely speaking, there are two sources of information about him. One is the various contemporary accounts of his reign as a ruler. The other is the chance factor that a large number of foreigners who interacted with him have left behind fairly detailed accounts of what they saw and encountered. The latter, if handled skillfully, can help us to discover the real Ranjit Singh.

As against two positive sources of information, one thing which is negative in character also needs to be referred to. Though there were more than 90 years between the disappearance of Sarkar-e-Khalsa and the exit of the British, this period of less than a century is packed with all kinds of developments; some of them can be easily described as far reaching in character. This refers as much to the application of the western technology on a wide scale as the assimilation of Punjab into the rest of India. In doing so, a process got initiated in course of which India became a part of the developed world and, the character – both of Indian economy and society, underwent a profound change.

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These developments were structural in character, fundamental in terms of their economic impact and can be easily identified. What is however difficult to identify are the social changes that took place in the Punjab. For instance, there was much greater fraternisation amongst the various communities during his rule than at any other time, whether before or after his regime. When Ranjit Singh took over power, the character of the state had been Islamic for a period of almost seven hundred years. As such, there was a certain affinity between what obtained in Afghanistan, Iran and several Central Asian countries and the Punjab. By the time Ranjit Singh finished his inning, the character of the state had undergone a profound change. It was no longer exclusively Islamic in character. Instead, it had become Punjabi in character.

While it retained Persian character, it also got deeply indigenised and assumed an unmistakably Punjabi hue. So much so that when, after 90 years of British rule Pakistan was established, some of the impact made by Ranjit Singh could still be seen as having survived. That is why the establishment of Pakistan did not mark an end of the turn that he had given to the polity. Perhaps the best way to describe the change would be to recall the phrase which Vincent Smith, writing in the beginning of the 20th century, used for Ranjit Singh's reign as representing "partnership with other communities."

Going by the prevalent ethos of those times, Ranjit Singh's rule could have been described as a period of Sikh rule. The phrase which Smith used however describes the true nature of his polity much better than any other description could have done. In order to understand the range of his achievements in this regard, one has to go into some further details.

It is not possible to compare Ranjit Singh's Punjab with what constituted the Punjab after the end of his rule. While Ranjit Singh's Punjab was Punjabi speaking; British Punjab had a certain proportion of the Hindi speaking population also. While firm data is not available, it seems safe to assume that something like two thirds of the total population of Punjab's population was Muslim in character and affiliation, and both the Hindus and the Sikhs constituted less than one third.

The truth of the matter however is that, under Ranjit Singh, people were not always categorised in the manner we have characterised them now. People professed different religions but, in terms of their cultural outlook and social interaction, the kind of separateness which became so noticeable under the British, just did not exist. By the time Ranjit Singh captured power, Punjab had become predominantly Muslim. Beginning with the invasions of the Mahmud of Ghazni, Islam struck deep roots in the Punjab. This was almost two centuries before the medieval Muslim dynasties captured power in Delhi. After that, they spread out to various other parts of India

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too.

When Ranjit Singh captured power, his problem was twofold. One was how to come to terms with his Sikh compatriots. During the 18th century, Punjab had been carved up by the 12 Sikh *misls*. The *misl* to which Ranjit Singh belonged was one of the smaller ones. This in itself was a miracle that someone who came from a small *misl* managed to out-maneuvre and overtake other *misls* and rule over the whole of the Punjab. This is not what is relevant to the point under discussion though it was necessary to refer to this particular dimension of his activity.

A more relevant thing was that, despite the overwhelming Muslim majority, to use the jargon which was not current during those days, Ranjit Singh had to win acceptance from the bulk of his subjects who were Muslim. Relations between the Muslims and the Sikhs had been one of each other's adversary. The political climate of the times underwent a marked change when, under Jehangir, Guru Arjun was tortured to death. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur which came almost a century later transformed the scene completely and led to the rise of the Khalsa. The few years of insurrection by Banda Bahadur against the Mughal rule helped to write a new chapter in North Indian history. On the whole, however, this was a period of Mughal decline and a mortal blow to it was inflicted by the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739. After another few years, Sirhind, Lahore as well as Multan got detached from the Mughal empire and came under the sway of the Afghans.

During the reign of Ahmed Shah Abdali, things were under control as far as he was concerned. After the Sikh *misls* took over, the situation underwent a qualitative change particularly during the last few decades of the 18th century. When Ranjit Singh came to power, he inherited the entire legacy of this earlier confrontation. How to transform the situation and change the character of the polity was a problem to which he had to find an answer. That he did it so successfully speaks volumes for his acumen, his sense of pragmatism and the ability to evolve a new kind of polity which has been so succinctly described by V.A. Smith. It is this particular dimension of his rule which requires to be analysed.

II

The manner in which Ranjit Singh ascended to power was unusual. The preceding half century had been highly turbulent in character. As long as Abdali was around, and was relatively free from pressures from home, he could govern Punjab. But after the mid 60's of the 18th century, Punjab became ungovernable.

This was largely owing to the rise of the *misls*. The Sikh *misls* though numerically a small proportion of the total population were on the ascendance. During the last three decades of the 18th century, they had become irresistible. Though they fought

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with one another also, the manner in which they spread out in different directions was impressive and totally contrary to the trends and directions which had manifested themselves during the preceding seven centuries.

Could the *misls* have performed better than they actually did? This is a question which has been often asked but there is no comprehensive or decisive answer to this question. In 1783 when they captured Delhi for a few days and penetrated the Red Fort, both the Mughal Emperor and his courtiers went into hiding. The *misls* were at the peak of their power at that time. But this success had a negative dimension to it also. The leaders of the two *misls* who went to the Red Fort simultaneously could not stand each other and almost came to blows.

What they lacked was the concept of power. If they had to capture power, they surely had to outgrow those ways which had characterised their functioning during the preceding few decades. In point of fact, they came together only when they were under attack; the establishment of the Dal Khalsa was an instance of what they could do. But without that external pressure, each one was a law unto himself. What they did not understand was how power was to be captured and then sustained in terms of a well administered polity and a stable and well governed state.

That happened only under Ranjit Singh but, by that time, the British had already occupied Delhi after having displaced the Marathas. A few years later, when Ranjit Singh had captured almost the whole of central Punjab and some parts of western Punjab and the territorial boundaries had to be defined anew, the British were no longer an insignificant power. No wonder the British drove a hard bargain and Ranjit Singh was left with no choice except to accept the Satluj as the dividing line. The Phoolkian states might have played a clever game and might have out-manoeuvred Ranjit Singh, but the plain fact is that by that time the British had virtually occupied the rest of India and what remained to be conquered by them were Punjab and Sind. The ground situation therefore pointed to the direction in which the division of borders was agreed upon between Ranjit Singh and the East India Company.

What was it in Ranjit Singh which enabled him to outstrip all his other compatriots? This is a question that needs to be gone into.

III

Even though orphaned at the age of 12, he learnt how to look after himself even at that age and took charge of his own affairs. Apart from the marital links that were established with two other *misls*, he established links with several others. The most powerful *misl* at that time was the Bhangi *misl*. This *misl* controlled Amritsar and, by implication, the Golden Temple. What tilted the balance was how Ranjit Singh won over the support of Sahib Singh Bedi whose standing amongst the Sikhs was very

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high. The other powerful figure in the Sikh hierarchy was Akali Phoola Singh who at that time was also the Jathedar of the Akal Takht.

With these two dominating figures in Sikh affairs on his side, he had nothing to fear. His so-called coronation in 1801 led to two developments: greater emasculation of a couple of other *misls* and the forging of various political alliances which stood him in good stead during the later years. Step by step, Ranjit Singh outdistanced everyone else and soon came to be accepted as the leader of the Khalsa.

This is precisely what had been missing in Sikh affairs during the earlier period. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had emerged as a leader and did exercise his leadership effectively to a large extent, yet the idea of everyone being equal and his own master was so incurably persistent that nothing like the situation corresponding to the emergence of early Ranjit Singh was witnessed in the last quarter of the 18th century. Had that come to pass, the history of Northern India might have been very different.

The Sikhs could have not only captured Delhi, they could have gone even beyond it. It is entirely a matter of speculation how far they could have gone and with what degree of success. Also, it is difficult to speculate on what would have been the role of the British who were already in control of substantial parts of the country. This much however is undeniable that the Sikh *misls* in their desire to assert their autonomy failed to collaborate with one another and failed to throw up a leader of the calibre of Ranjit Singh.

This was one part of his problem. The other part was equally complicated. When it came to dealing with the *misls* and the Akalis, Ranjit Singh managed to get them on his side. They in turn supported his projection as the leader of the community. This enabled him to further fortify his position. But, as already stated, the bulk of the population was Muslim. After 700 years of uninterrupted rule, the Muslims were now faced with a situation where the community which had challenged and confronted them was now in power. Could some kind of a working relationship be established between the two of them?

The answer to it is that Ranjit Singh did much more than that. He not only established a working relationship with the Muslim majority, he did something more than that. Western Punjab was dotted with a number of small principalities and fiefdoms. Each one of them had to be conquered and was conquered. In each case, those dethroned, so to speak, were neither killed nor driven out. On the contrary, most of them were pensioned off and given lands adequate enough to help them live in affluence and dignity. Several of them became friendly with him and worked on his behalf. Some of them who were not reconciled to their fate found that there was no alternative except to work in collaboration with him and this is precisely what they did.

The most powerful of them was the Nawab of Multan. Ranjit Singh allowed

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that Nawab to survive as an independent ruler for almost two decades till there came a stage when he felt that Multan had to be annexed to his kingdom. That was done in 1818 A.D. After Multan had been annexed, he turned to Kashmir and Peshawar. He conquered both of them one by one and made them a part of his kingdom.

In doing so, Ranjit Singh had repeatedly faced the problem of how to deal with those who, one by one, were being deprived of their local importance and wealth. A detailed study of what he did is available in most of the standard biographies of Ranjit Singh. Each one of them makes it clear that Ranjit Singh adopted various ways to defeat or neutralise them, win them over or marginalise them. The techniques adopted by him were broadly divisible into these four categories. But overriding everything was another fact and that was that, over the years, he had won the esteem and affection of most of his subjects At the root of it lay that unwavering approach which Smith has described as "partnership with other communities". If Ranjit Singh is to be remembered in history as an outstanding ruler, it is largely for his mode of governance in which hardly anyone felt alienated from him. What can be a greater tribute to the regard and affection that he inspired that, even today, both in India and Pakistan, Ranjit Singh is remembered as perhaps the most outstanding Punjabi of recent times.

IV

What was so outstanding about Ranjit Singh? All kinds of claims have been made about his achievements, his never having lost a battle, his skilful dealings with the British, his handling of the Muslims and several other things. Each one of them is an achievement by itself and deserves unconditional praise. But perhaps his greatest achievement was the mode of governance which he evolved and implemented. It is this aspect of his performance which needs to be dilated upon and one way of evaluating his performance is to look at the way he made his mark, to start with. In this connection, two incidents may be referred to.

The first one was how he captured Lahore. The manner in which he went about the job throws light on the kind of man he was and how he handled the problems which arose with the right balance of caution, assertion, diplomatic finesse and the art of making friends. Between 1793 and 1798, Shah Zaman, the grandson of Abdali, made three attempts to reassert his rule over the Punjab. Though his grandfather had governed the Punjab fairly effectively, in the final outcome, it was the *misls* who had the better of him. Nevertheless, the Afghan claim on the Punjab state stayed unchallenged.

When, on his fourth attempt, he captured Lahore (that was in 1798), he did not have time enough to consolidate his rule. To put it another way, his hold on Lahore

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was precarious. The man to challenge him was Ranjit Singh. He came from Gujranwala to the outskirts of the city and, standing outside the Lahore Fort, he challenged Shah Zaman to fight a duel with him. Shah Zaman did not have the courage to respond. Meanwhile word came from Kabul that a brother of Shah Zaman threatened to capture power during his absence and he had no choice except to rush back and save his throne.

At this point of time, Ranjit Singh could have rushed in and captured Lahore. But he did not choose to do so. Instead, he remained a silent spectator when three of the Bhangi Sardars moved in and took over the city. They divided the city into three zones and started levying taxes and so on. As to what is called civic administration, no attention whatsoever to this part of their responsibility was paid. Whenever anyone went with a complaint, he was referred to the other Sardar on the ground that the matter concerned him. Within a few months, disaffection began to grow apace and people felt so alienated from the Bhangi rulers that some people got together and mooted the idea that Ranjit Singh be invited to take over the city of Lahore.

This is precisely what was done. The names of those who constituted the deputation are a matter of record. It is said that Fakir Aziz-ud-din who was a well-known physician of the town and later on became Ranjit Singh's foreign minister blessed the idea. Whatever be the details, a deputation was organised. It first went to Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law, whose headquarters was at Batala. Having had a meeting with her, the deputation went on to see Ranjit Singh.

What was Ranjit Singh's response? It was not to simply get on to his horseback and attack Lahore. Instead, he sent one of his trusted men to survey the situation and report to him whether the opinion of the deputation represented substantial sections of the population or only a closed circle. It was only when he was convinced that the general sentiment in the city was hostile to the Bhangis and his entry into the city would be well received then moved his troops in concert with his mother-in-law, who also came along with her own troops.

He did not choose to enter the city but he encircled it. Having done that, he issued an ultimatum to the three Bhangi Sardars to withdraw peacefully, otherwise they would be driven out. In response, a small detachment of troops came out to oppose him. The fight was over within 10 minutes and the Bhangi battalion immediately disappeared. Ranjit Singh did not choose to imprison them. On the contrary, he made it easy for whoever wanted to do the same. Two of the Bhangi Sardars ran away but one of them entered the Lahore Fort and shut himself up with instructions not to admit anyone.

Even in this favourable situation, Ranjit Singh did not act immediately. What he did was to simply order his artillery to get ready to attack the Fort. Meanwhile a

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meeting of the citizens was held. After they had met, all of them decided to unlock the gates of the Lahore Fort thereby prompting the watchmen to melt away. The path was now clear and Ranjit Singh's troops entered the city.

The troops were divided into two groups. One part of his troops captured the city while another surrounded the Fort. The troops were told explicitly not to commit any act of loot or rape. The city of Lahore had been witness to many a scene of disorder and anarchy in the past. Ranjit Singh, however, himself went round the city. Wherever he went, he assured people that there would be no disorder of any kind and no one should worry with regard to his security. He paid a personal visit to the main mosque of the city. The city Kotwal who mattered a great deal was told to carry on with his duties and ensure total peace and tranquility.

On the third day of his occupation of Lahore, Chet Singh, one of the three Bhangi Sardars who had not chosen to quit, and had shut himself up in the Lahore Fort, sent word that he wanted to settle things and withdraw peacefully. Ranjit Singh responded in the same tone, without any acrimony, and indeed undertook to deal with him with due propriety. Chet Singh immediately came and surrendered to Ranjit Singh. Thereupon he was treated with due dignity, given a *jagir* and allowed to leave.

This whole incident has been described in some detail because it shows the kind of man Ranjit Singh was. Though he was not even 20 years old at that time, he knew how to handle a difficult situation like the one he was faced with. It was open to him to have made a dash for Lahore soon after Shah Zaman had left, but that would have immediately invited the intervention of the Bhangis who were only a few miles away in Amritsar. In any case, of all the *misls* at that time, theirs was the largest and the most influential. Therefore, he allowed them to occupy Lahore and make fool of themselves. He knew that things would fall into his lap with the passage of time. This is precisely what happened. Lahore being the capital of the state was the prime prize and to have captured it conferred enormous prestige on him. The Bhangis did not accept their exit from Lahore gracefully. As was bound to happen, they mobilised their troops and came out to confront him but more of that later.

Meanwhile, what Ranjit Singh did was to establish his bona fides with the citizens of Lahore. Even though they had invited him to occupy the city and he had done so, within a few months, he demonstrated to the Lahore public that he genuinely cared for them. This was something that the rulers of those times never did. They believed in the might of their arms. Nobody at that time had heard of anything like the rights of a citizen or equality before law or any of those things which today are common currency. Within a few months, it became clear to everyone that he knew how to govern. So much so that if some of the evidence now coming to light is to be believed, he made an impression upon the leaders of the Sikh clergy who, within two years of

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his capture of Lahore, decided to back him in preference to anyone else. But before this issue is pursued any further, the story of his next round of confrontation with the Bhangi Sardars needs to be disposed of. This is the second point referred to above.

The capture of Lahore upset the Bhangis no end. Another man to feel unhappy about this development was Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. He was the eldest amongst the surviving *misls* leaders. During his chequered career, he had led expeditions to Delhi, Aligarh, Saharanpur and various other places in Western U.P. But one thing that had eluded him was the capture of Lahore. What the Bhangi Sardar now did was to remobilise their own forces, team up with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and form an alliance with the Nawab of Kasur who was not all that far from Lahore. One or two others also ganged up.

In January 1800, several thousand soldiers came together at a distance of about 12 miles from Lahore. This posed a threat to Ranjit Singh's control over the city. Therefore, Ranjit Singh too mobilised his forces and confronted them. The interesting thing about this confrontation was that it went on for about six weeks. No army would fire the first shot and, day after day, the two armies stared at each other. But no one took the initiative to fire first. It was an unusual kind of situation; each side was waiting for the other to begin the hostilities. But nobody did so.

The leader of the Bhangis, Gulab Singh, was given to very heavy drinking. It so happened that, after a few weeks, Gulab Singh died of excessive drinking during those very days with the result that the army confronting Ranjit Singh melted away. It was presumably in this background that the leaders of the Sikh clergy decided to back Ranjit Singh and, as a token of their support to him, decided to go through with some kind of a coronation ceremony which perhaps was not more than a mere declaration that he was the man to watch. The rest is history, as they say and need not be gone into any further. The point of this long digression, if digression it is, is to make the point that he intuitively understood the art of governance. He knew when to confront and when to retreat, how far to push and when, and what tactics of accommodation or aggression to adopt. This is as far as his military generalship was concerned. When it came to dealing with the people, he gave ample evidence of how he was going to do that. More than anything else, during the next decade or even more, Ranjit Singh gave most of his time to expanding the borders of his kingdom. This, however, should not be taken to mean that civil administration was neglected. For the most part Ranjit Singh took over the administrative system which had been designed by the Mughals. With one difference, however. The scale of operations in the case of the Mughals was virtually the whole of India. In Ranjit Singh's case, the scale was much smaller. There should be nothing surprising about it, therefore, that he had firsthand knowledge even of those things which were not directly under his

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eye. According to a British observer, Ranjit Singh virtually knew everything about the agrarian conditions in almost each village like the state of the crops, the cattle wealth of the peasants, the prices prevalent in the market and a hundred other things. In other words, the scale of operations being small in this case, nothing escaped his vigilant eye.

What made the crucial difference however was the fact that nothing was too small to receive his attention and everything was qualitatively different because of this element of the personal touch. Two instances would clarify what is implied here.

He was so concerned about the welfare of the peasantry that he would not allow any damage to their standing crops. Horsemen had to dismount while passing through a village. This concern of his was reflected at every level throughout his administration. In one particular case, the Governor of Multan, Sawan Mal, went to the extent of arresting his own son who was accused of trampling upon the standing crop of a farmer. When the son was found guilty, he was sent to prison.

In another case, Jemadar Khushal Singh brought bags of money when he returned from his assignment as the Governor of Kashmir. This astonished and upset Ranjit Singh. During those days, Kashmir had been reeling under the blight of a famine. While his tax collection system was efficient, he would not go to the extent of taking away food from people who were starving. Thereupon, he reproached his officer in the open court and ordered that large scale aid be rushed to Kashmir so that the suffering of the people could be relieved.

The question to ask however is: Were these personal responses or was there a system about these things? The answer to this question is that nothing like a system existed. What ensured efficient functioning however was the fact that no one was under any misapprehension regarding Ranjit Singh's instincts and preferences. He wanted to help the common man. If any instance of maladministration came to his notice, his response was swift and decisive.

In such a situation, most officials were afraid of doing anything which, if detected, could attract the Maharaja's wrath. Most people were, therefore, careful in the discharge of their duties. It must be acknowledged, however, that there was no regular system whereby it could be ensured that the common man would not be harassed or discriminated against. His own personal conduct was exemplary no doubt but to infer from it that everyone's conduct was equally exemplary would be to misjudge the situation.

Most of what has been said above is widely known. Had there been a well organised system of administration, some enterprising writer would perhaps have done a whole book on it by now. If that has not been done, this is largely because it is assumed that while a system did exist, it was by and large derived from the Mughal

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system of administration and suffered from the same infirmities. On the whole, however, its success under Ranjit Singh lay in the personal commitment and dynamism of the ruler.

One thing which he did was however unique and that was to win over the trust and loyalty of his Muslim subjects. I would like to suggest here that his treatment of the Muslims was partly an instinctive response and partly basic style of governance. To have alienated Muslims would have been a self-defeating act. This would have also meant spending a good deal of his time and energy in containing the discontent that would have resulted from the wrong approach to things. He, therefore, opted for a mode of governance wherein the Muslim population was co-opted into the system of administration and given a sense of parity with all others. If this formulation is valid, the matter needs to be investigated further.

V

Ranjit Singh's dealings with the Muslims did not result from a simple minded decision to win them over. That was one dimension of his approach. But there were several other dimensions and each one of them needs to be taken into account. Briefly put, his considerations were personal, ideological and political in character and in the ascending order of importance.

In personal terms, an element of his ideological make up was also involved. Perhaps the two elements acted and reacted upon each other. Unlike several *misl* leaders who had hardly given any serious thought to this issue, Ranjit Singh was a man who was deeply aware of his identity as a Punjabi. Throughout the 18th century, Punjab had passed through turbulent times. The advent of the Afghans had turned things upside down to a great extent. This was also the period when Waris Shah's *Hir* was written. No literary work of the earlier period had projected the concept of the Punjab so pointedly and so compellingly as this particular long poem had done. In other words, even when fighting was going on all around, things were happening on the literary and cultural plane at the same time.

Indeed, it is possible to trace a line of development which unambiguously points to the slow emergence and some degree of definition of a Punjabi identity. With the rise of Ranjit Singh, political and social conditions became stable. What was emerging on the plane of folk culture therefore got further fortified. Under Ranjit Singh, there was a certain amount of flowering of that new culture which was beginning to unfold at that time. Details do not have to be provided here; those are known both to the students of Punjabi literature and Punjab history.

One notable dimension of this particular phase of the cultural flowering of those days was that its leadership lay with those Muslim writers who had been able to

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work out a synthesis of a mode of thinking and expression which was a blend of the indigenous elements as also the Islamic elements. Both the mystic elements as represented by the poetic tradition of Sheikh Farid and Buleh Shah and the *Kissa* poetry as represented by Waris Shah and several others coalesced to produce emerged into a broad and vigorous stream of literary creation.

This was also the period when the controversies and contentions of the 17th century had become a part of history. Under Ranjit Singh, the tone of cultural life was set by some of these thinkers, poets and *Kissa* writers. Every single community looked up to Ranjit Singh as the Sarkar, a kind of father figure. In plain words, the cultural vitality of that period led to the gradual coming together of the various communities and the evolution of a common culture. Ranjit Singh was both a source of inspiration and an embodiment of what was happening.

Coupled to it was the second dimension of the contemporary situation. Ranjit Singh did not interfere with Muslim social practices in any way. Both the police system and the judicial system which had evolved, over the preceding centuries, were kept intact. On top of it was the mode of governance which he had evolved for himself. The character of this governance was concern for the common man and an attempt to make his life easy and relaxed. Something has been already said about his concern for the peasantry. He was equally concerned about trade and commerce. While he had dreams of exporting goods manufactured in the Punjab to foreign countries (though that dream could not be realised because of his inability to have access to Sind), trade within Punjab and the neighbouring areas was consistently promoted. Enough data is available on the subject without having to adduce any further evidence of it.

In brief, Ranjit Singh had a certain ideal of kingship in his mind and that ideal included care of the common man and an unfaltering sense of justice. Countless stories about the way he administered justice are in circulation. Some of them may not be entirely correct but one thing cannot be overlooked. Within a matter of years, he became a legend in his own life time. As K.K. Khullar says, in his book on Ranjit Singh which deserves to be more widely read than it is, "The Maharajah used to say that the only divine element in kingship was justice." His single-minded commitment to justice was some kind of a passion with him. It should not be necessary to refer to the instructions which he issued to the Chief Kotwal of Lahore wherein he said that even if he committed a crime, he could be hauled up. With this kind of thinking, the obvious thing to do was to treat everyone alike; it did not matter whether they were Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims.

While his personal and ideological inclinations – or compulsions – have been outlined above, the decision to deal with the Muslims like everyone else was basically political in character. In order to understand the implications of this decision it is

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important to understand the kind of man Ranjit Singh was. Two characteristics of his personality were central in his make up. These were his understanding of the concept of power and his way of exercising it. In respect of his second characteristic, the phrase used repeatedly is the mode of governance that he evolved.

During the preceding several decades, the *misls* had done an outstanding job in driving out the Afghans and taking over the reins of power. What they however lacked was the concept of power. Both the concept of power and the way of exercising it are integrally related to each other. Hardly anyone connected with the *misls* in the 18th century had given evidence of any such understanding. What was the outcome?

Each *misl* was a law unto itself. It controlled a certain area and had a certain rough and ready system of governance. The neighbouring areas were controlled by another *misl*. Sometimes they clashed with each other but more often they respected one another's territorial control. During the days that Abdali was at the peak of his power, the *misls* came together and confronted him jointly. This joint collaboration however could not survive for long. When there was no pressure from outside, there was no occasion of collaboration with one another.

Ranjit Singh was the first man in about a hundred years who had a clear understanding of what constituted power and how to exercise it. Capturing a certain territory demanded resources, organisation, planning and the fighting ability. Ranjit Singh gave ample evidence of each one of them. After the territory had been conquered, there was the question of keeping others away lest they recapture it. If that could be ensured, as it generally was, the next job was how to govern that territory. Ranjit Singh excelled in both these capabilities.

There are scholars like Patwant Singh who accuse Ranjit Singh of having weakened the republican tradition established by Guru Gobind Singh. There is no doubt that he did so. But the question to ask is: Was this not inevitable and in keeping with the changing times? A stage had come when the *misls* were behaving in a self destructive way. What was required was the capacity to make others follow him and provide the kind of leadership which was needed at that time.

Ranjit Singh's distinction lies precisely in this fact that when the *misls* had reached a kind of dead end, there arose a man who by dint of his extraordinary abilities founded an empire. That the empire could not survive him is another fact that to which several factors, including the limitations of his own family, contributed.

Without going too deeply into these issues, one thing stands out. Ranjit Singh understood power and achieved it in a manner in which no one in recent history had done so far. Sahib Singh Bedi's support to him which counted for a great deal was based on the assumption that the kind of potential that Ranjit Singh seemed to have would unify the Punjab and provide leadership to the community.

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It is in respect of leadership, however, that Ranjit Singh outpaced all his contemporaries. If Ranjit Singh had to rule the Punjab, he had to evolve a kind of strategy wherein, despite being a member of the smallest community in the state, he could take the majority along with him. To do this after a history of more than a century of confrontation with the majority community was almost an impossible task but Ranjit Singh performed it with signal success.

The issue before Ranjit Singh was: How to deal with the Muslims? Should he settle old scores? He ruled it out both on ideological and political grounds. Ideologically, this would have been inconsistent with the Sikh tradition. Guru Gobind Singh's conduct of the wars forced on him was anything but vindictive. Not only that, he forbade his followers to indulge in loot or plunder or outrage the modesty of women or do anything which was unethical. Even when his followers were subjected to a systematic hunt and ruthless oppression, none of them behaved in an indefensible manner. The Code of Conduct followed by his followers was so rigorous on this point that there is not a single case where anything indefensible was done. Therefore, to settle old scores would have been ideologically unacceptable to him.

Politically speaking, such a course of action would have been self destructive. Anyone who sets out to settle old scores destroys himself in the process. Ranjit Singh was much too clear headed in his thinking to undertake anything so foolish or so inimical to his interests.

Perhaps a psychological factor was at work here. Ranjit Singh was a man who never lost a battle in his life. His self confidence was therefore boundless. Anyone who felt unsure of himself might have surrendered to the lure of vindictiveness. Ranjit Singh was singularly free from this weakness. If one may venture to say so, to choose to become vindictive would have been a mark of personal and ideological degradation in his eyes. Ranjit Singh, therefore, was not the man to give in to any such compulsion, even if somebody had sought to force it upon him.

He was a supremely self assured person and he dealt with his Muslim subjects in a manner where he was the master and they looked up to him. In his numerous dealings with the people he displaced, he was invariably magnanimous. It is only a man with a big heart who can be magnanimous. Ranjit Singh's emotional and spiritual strength was so solidly based on a series of important achievements that nothing could deflect him from the manner in which he chose to deal with other people, more particularly those who had no choice but to look up to him.

Both from the psychological and the political points of view, therefore, Ranjit Singh knew what he wanted to do. He consolidated the entire Punjabi-speaking area of the Punjab minus the area which lay to the north of the Satluj in respect of which he had entered into an arrangement with the East India Company within a decade or

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so. Having done that, he set out on his conquest of the valley of Kashmir and the area to the north of Attock.

With his unique combination of the understanding of power and the way to exercise it, he went on to score victory after victory. If his successors could not continue to perform on the same plane of competence and courage, it only goes to underline the point that he towered over all others around him. Every achiever has to work out his own formula of success. Those who came after him failed to do that, and they are the ones we are stuck with today.

– Dr. Amrik Singh

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15

NATURE OF SARKAR-E-KHALSA
– NEW BRAND OF MONARCHY –

The term 'Sarkar-i-Khalsa Ranjit Singh' implies the concept of the Government of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The evolution of Sarkar-i-Khalsa was gradual under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. When he conquered Lahore in 1799, he was faced with the problem, how to govern the people. J.D. Cunningham has described the conditions. "Ranjit found the Punjab a warring confederacy, a ploy of faction of Chiefs pressed by Afghans and Marathas and ready to submit to English supremacy. He consolidated numerous petty states into a kingdom he wrested from Kabul, the fairest of its provinces, and gave the potent British no cause of interference".[1] Previous system of administration was based on *Gurmatta* which failed to unite the Sikhs. It had led to diversely and intercine warfare. The other pattern was that of the Mughal government, viz., declaring oneself king, issue coins in one's name and display of grandeur by sitting on a gorgeous throne, etc. This could not be acceptable to the mass of Ranjit Singh's warlike co-religionists. After the rejection of the two above courses, Ranjit Singh thought of a modified system of monarchy. Though monarchy was not according to the political ideology of the Khalsa, which was designed on democratic lines, based on the chosen ones, yet it could be acceptable to the mass of Sikh people. Banda Singh Bahadur, who had established first Sikh State, had adopted this form of government. Thus, monarchy was established by Ranjit Singh with the following characteristics:

No Personal Coin Issued

According to the prevalent custom, the Kings or Emperors used to strike coins in their name to proclaim their sovereignty. In the case of Ranjit Singh, no such coin was issued. The legend of the Coin issued by Banda Singh Bahadur in 1710,[2] which had been adopted by the various Misaldars (Sikh Chiefs during 18th century) was

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allowed to continue. The inscription on his coin was:

"Dego Tego Fateh Nusrat Bedrang
Yaafat Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh."

"The kettle and sword symbols of Charity and Power, Victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh."

In the Indian tradition, coins are struck in the name of sovereign. In the case of Sarkar-i-Khalsa, de jure sovereign were Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and not Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Similarly, on the seal of Sarkar-i-Khalsa was engraved prefix 'Akal Sahai', which means "With the Grace of God". It reminds one of British General Cromwell's inscription, "God with Us".

No Sitting on the Throne nor Wearing Crown

In the Lahore fort Mughal throne was available or Ranjit Singh could have prepared his own throne. But due to the deference of Khalsa tradition which were based on equality, he never sat on the throne. Nor did he ever wear a crown on his head. Osborne, who visited Lahore Darbar in 1838, describes: "Cross legged in Golden chair dressed in simple white wearing no ornament but a single string of enormous pearls round the waist and the celebrated Koh-i-noor on his arm. In this respect, he was a marked contrast with the familiar type of oriental potentates."[3]

Reverence to Khalsa

Guru Gobind Singh had abolished personal Guruship and invested it in Khalsa. Ranjit Singh always acted in the name of Khalsa. A drum which Guru Gobind Singh had constructed was named Ranjit Nagara. Ranjit Singh professedly regarded himself as nothing more than a mere drum of Khalsa for asserting the political supremacy of Khalsa.[4] In referring to his government, he used the term *Sarkar-i-Khalsa.*

No Title Declared

After occupation of Lahore in 1799, Maharaja Ranjit Singh called a Darbar on 12th April, 1801 inviting all prominent Misaldars, Hindus and Muslim chiefs. After certain religious ceremonies, Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, direct descendant of Guru Nanak, applied *tilak* on Ranjit Singh's forehead. According to Fauja Singh, there was no declaration for assuming the title of Maharaja. Ranjit Singh always loved to be called Singh Sahib, a title which can be applied to any member of Sikh Community. Therefore, "Maharaja" title has been mentioned in some of the Treaties in 1834 and 1838, and later he allowed people to address him such like Maharaja. But he never declared himself to be Maharaja.[5]

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Nature of the Rule

In order to understand the concept of Sarkar-i-Khalsa, or its nature, one has to comprehend the term Khalsa. It was first used by Guru Tegh Bahadur while addressing his congregation,[6] meaning there by the "Chosen ones", "pure", "having direct relations". During the Mughal times, Khalsa land was that land which was directly governed by the Mughal Emperor. Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa in 1699 A.D. and linked it with *Waha-i-Guru* (*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa; Waheguru ji ki Fateh*), viz., God. In the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh scripture, it had been stated that God and Guru are on the same footing '*Gur Parmesar Iko jan.*' The attributes of God had been described by Guru Gobind Singh in his Jap Sahib. Some of significant attributes of God mentioned by him are applicable to Khalsa. These are "*Garibul Prastain*"[7] "*God is nourisher of the poor*", "*Garib-ul-niwaz Hain*"[8]- "*God is kind to the poor*". "*Deenan Ki Pritpal Kare Nit*" "*God gives livelihood to the lowly and afflicted*".[9] About Banda Singh Bahadur's rule, Irvine wrote: "A low scavenger or leather dresser, lowest of the low in Indian estimation had only to leave home and join the Guru (referring to Banda Singh), when in a short time he would return to his birth place as its ruler with order of appointment in his hands."[10]

It has been agreed by one and all contemporary writers like Cunningham[11] and Ganesh Dass Badehra[12] that the monarchy established by Ranjit Singh was based on the people's will. Unlike other despotic rulers, he never considered himself infallible. In *The Real Ranjit Singh*, Faqir Syed Waheed-ud-din, has quoted a *firman* in which it has been stated, "Indeed even if His Highness himself should issue an inappropriate order against any resident of Lahore, it should be clearly brought to his notice so that it may be amended."[13]

Secular Character

Ranjit Singh was neither a religious fanatic nor a zealot, his conception of the Khalsa was broad-based. It enshrined the ideal of a Sikh monarchy unencumbered by religious intoleration or a lure of preferential treatment to those who professed the faith of the monarch, and benevolence to persons of all creeds.

The concept of benevolent Sikh monarchy was upheld by him in offering equal opportunities of employment to all his subjects without the distinction of caste and creed, his devotion in saintly persons of all denominations, and a generous distribution of endowments and charities to the temples and shrines of all creeds. Raghunath temple, Banares, Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and Dataganj Baksh, Lahore all were beneficiaries of his charities. Though the Sikh monarchy did everything for the Khalsa with the help of the Lord (Akal-Sahai), into chief merit was religious moderation and practical efficiency.

To the Sikhs, it was an embodiment of the ideals of the Faith - the Khalsa, to

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others, Hindus and Muhammadans, it was benevolence personified. It was singularly secular keeping a benevolent regard of the well-being of all classes of people. Ranjit Singh either designedly or because of an inborn humanity in his character, introduced an element of tenderness, prudence, and a sense of justice in the concept of Sikh monarchy, which he had set up.[14] He used to give jagirs to his conquered enemies of all creeds.

In making an estimate of Ranjit Singh's secular administration, we should note in particular the relations between the Government and the Muhammadan subjects. As early as 1801 we find Ranjit Singh nominating Kazi Nazimuddin as the head of all the Muhammandans who recognised his government. Mufti Muhammad Shah was appointed as his advisor in matters relating to mortrages, sales and contracts. Imam Bakhsh was made the head of the city police. He had many trusted Muhammadan officers like Aziz-ud-din, Nur-ud-din, Chaudhuri Qadir Bakhsh and others. During a great part of Ranjit Singh's reign the custodian of the celebrated Sikh fort at Gobindgarh in Amritsar was Imam-ud-din. When Ranjit Singh appointed Nur-ud-din as the Governor of Gujarat, the high caste Hindus wearing the sacred thread protested against this but to no purpose. The great Sikh ruler was superior and above communal prejudices. He even publicly expressed his regard for Muhammadan saints. His custom was to favour the Syeds in the matter of assessment. Sometimes Muhammadans who could reproduce the entire Quran from memory were ordered to be brought and they were asked to reproduce the contents of the Holy Quran for days together and the Maharaja would pay them liberally. Ranjit Singh maintained the established Muslim tradition of State grants to Ulamas and holymen. There is an important entry in the Dairy - News of Ranjit Singh's Court - 25th August, 1825.... "The Kazis, Syads, Alams and Fakirs of Peshawar were given good Khilats and each was given a jagir for his maintenance when the Maharaja annexed Peshwar."[15]

Royal Maxims of the Government of Ranjit Singh

Sarkar-e-Khalsa – Maharaja Ranjit Singh wrote in detail the maxim of his government in an epistle addressed to one of his European officers, Major H.M.L. Lawrence, the author of *Adventures of an Officer in Punjab*

a) Oppress not the Poor

"This wise man neglected not his duty towards his master, and taking his seat in the hall of obedience, remembereth that humility and faithfulness cause exaltation. Falsehood brings a man to shame, and lying lips dishonour their possessor. Be then content with the fortune that has poured over thy head. Be faithful, honest and true and mankind will follow thee. Think of thine end and oppress not the poor, so shall thy name remain when all else of thee is gone."

"Now give the ear of attention and heart of obedience to the orders that follow.

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My kingdom is a great kingdom. It was small, it is now large, it was scattered, broken and divided, it is now consolidated. It must increase in prosperity and descend to my posterity. The maxims of Taimur have guided me, what he professed and ordered I have conquered, and by generosity, discipline and policy, I have regulated and consolidated my government. I have rewarded the bold, and encouraged merit wherever it was to be found. On the field of battle, I exalted the valiant, with my troops. I have shared all dangers, all fatigues. Both on the field and in the cabinet, I shut partiality from my soul, and closed my eyes to personal comfort. With the robes of empire, I put on the mantle of care. I fed faqirs and holy men, and I gained their prayers, the guilty as the innocent I spared, and those whose hands were raised against myself have met my clemency. Sri Purukhji has, therefore, been merciful to his servant, and increased his power, so that his territory now extends to the borders of China and the limits of the Afghans, with all Multan and the rich possessions beyond the Sutlej. To be the favoured servant of such a monarch is an honour, to serve such Raj is dignity."[16]

Generosity

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was very generous towards his employees, both civil and military. Ganesh Dass Vadehra who was contemporary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh writes about his generosity, "The Maharaja knew all of them from brightest to the lowest in the army and called them for various assignments. He treated everybody according to his status. The Maharaja could recognise a person even after ten years. He knew the names of various Chaudharis, landlords, *Quanungo* and various other officials and in the event of emergency addressed *Parwanas* to them by name. The Maharaja was very generous towards his subordinates. Whosoever came near him, was bestowed with honour, fortune and wealth. The persons like me who remained cut off from his presence were most unfortunate. In his court gold and wealth rained from every nook and corner and the courtiers never considered any one equal to themselves."[17]

In the end, it may be concluded that the monarchy established by Ranjit Singh was different from that of Asian or Mughal kings. In the case of Ranjit Singh, no *Khutba* was read nor title of Badshah (emperor) was assumed, not the king was declared as sovereign on the coins. In the case of Ranjit Singh, sovereignty rested with Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh in whose names coins were struck. The Afghan and Mughal Kings used to sit on throne and wear crown. Ranjit Singh never wore the crown. Mughal emperors considered themselves as *Jill-e-Elahi* (Shadow of God) but, Ranjit Singh considered monarchy as a gift of God and considered himself servant of Khalsa. Benevolent Sikh monarchy of Ranjit Singh was one of the main fortunes of *Sarkar-e-Khalsa.*

– Dr. Kirpal Singh

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MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH
– A BENEVOLENT MONARCH –

Poorly served by historians, biographers and news-writers, Maharaja Ranjit Singh has suffered both at the hands of his admirers and detractors. While his admirers have made him a saint who never sneezed nor sinned, placed a crown on his head which he never wore, changed his date of birth, highjacked his place of birth, his critics, mostly British, portrayed him as a wily oriental, a drunkard and a debauch, a tippler who teased the dancing girls in camp and court, had affair with a boy courtier, whose soldiers de-flowered every maiden they met in the field or the forest, whose greed for gold was un-limited, his avarice un-spelled. Peasantry suffered enormously under him and merchants and traders groaned under the weight of heavy taxation. According to them, Ranjit Singh was a despot whose tyranny was absolute, whose word was law. The result was that the real (*asli*) Ranjit Singh remained hidden in the debris of history and a false (*naqli*) Ranjit Singh emerged who had neither any social foresight nor economic vision, a heartless ruler who knew neither charity nor mercy. The facts, however, are entirely otherwise.

Once the gossipy accounts of the so-called British 'historians' and news-writers are kept aside, a very different picture of the Maharaja unfolds itself. It is that of a simple peasant and a brave soldier who excelled both at the plough and the sword, the field of corn and the field of the battle, a gentle king with a sensitive heart with a deep concern for his people who had suffered enormously in the last eight hundred years, who considered sovereignty as the preserve of the people and he only its trustee. In the true Aryan tradition, Ranjit Singh's greatest gift was democracy to his people, the people of Punjab. In a short span of 40-years rule (1799-1839), he brought back the prosperity of Punjab of the days of Raja Anang Pal, the last independent ruler of

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Punjab whose territories extended beyond Kabul and touched Ghazni. The contemporary records in Indian languages such as Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Persian and Pahari speak of a Maharaja who remained humane even on the battlefield, whose social and economic reforms had a human face, in whose rule cultivator was the king and tiller the very important person.

Maharaja's agricultural policy and his land revenue system revolved wholly round the cultivator and the peasant, the actual tiller. It is important to remember that while the land revenue system of the Mughals who preceded him was meant to safeguard the interests of the landed aristocracy, and the land revenue system of the British who succeeded him filled their own pockets, the Maharaja's system assured the land to the tiller which is still the dream and ambition of many communist regimes today. This aspect assumes greater significance when it is realised that in those pre-income tax days, land revenue was the major, if not the only source to meet the financial requirements of the state.

The Maharaja's policy brought more area under cultivation than ever before. The ravaged fields smiled again and the Punjab plains became once again plains churning milk and honey. Each cultivator was the owner of the land he cultivated. The name of the cultivator was engraved even on the well he used, something which had never happened in the history of India before. 'Collect revenue with a soft tongue' was his advice to the revenue collectors. Always keep in mind the well-being of the tax-payer. The result was the state revenues increased manifold. So did the prosperity of the people of Punjab crushed by the excesses of eight centuries. In times of failure of rain, drought, floods, revenue collection was suspended and loans were given, later to be turned into grants. If that is despotism, the expression itself needs to be re-defined.

According to Jacquemont, the French Botanist, who came to Punjab in search of rare plants and rarer roses: 'The Maharaja knew by heart flora and fauna, population and produce. His conversation is a nightmare. He passes from one subject to another like a flash'. Land was sacred to the Maharaja but more sacred was the tax-payer, the tiller. In a letter to Lehna Singh Majithia instructing him to collect the revenue of the newly-conquered territory of Kashmir, Maharaja's letter states: "Take care that all residents of the land are happy and in the cradle of comfort and ease. See that all the cultivators have prosperous houses and house-holds. Realise the revenue with a sweet tongue." It may be of interest to remember that Kashmiri *saffron* yielded a substantial amount in tax.

Ranjit Singh's concern for peasantry was highly personalised. He never forgot that he was one of them. His acceptance of the impersonal title of Sarkar conformed to his Jat origin. He even encouraged them to call him 'Bhai Saab'. A true member of the Khalsa commonwealth, he strictly adhered to the economic principles of the

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socialistic organisation whose foundations were laid by Guru Gobind Singh. According to Shahmat Ali, the author of *Sikhs and Afghans*, the annual revenue of the state of Punjab was about three *crores* of *rupees*. In the words of an Austrian traveller Baron Charles Hugel, "Large productive lands are watered by never-failing springs of the Himalayas which swell into the Punjab streams capable of bearing the largest vessels and favoured with a delightful climate. People are happy and there is plenty to eat." The greatest achievement of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, according to Hugel, is to raise all the people of Punjab to the same social level. In his rural tours he sat on the same charpoy with his subjects whom he called 'brothers'.

Capital punishment was abolished which is still the dream of many civilised countries. Even Emily Eden was compelled to say, "He hardly ever takes away life which is wonderful in a despot, and he is extremely beloved by his people." In civil and military service recruitment, merit alone was the criterion, any one could walk upto the Maharaja and claim justice as a matter of right. He was the first as well as the last court of appeal. Women were respected. According to a traveller, "Crowds pass peacefully. Not a bough is broken, no rude remark to a woman." In his own words, "By counsel and providence combined with valour I have conquered. By generosity, discipline and policy I have regulated and consolidated my government. I have rewarded the bold and encouraged merit wherever it was to be found. On the field of the battle, I have exalted the valiant, with my troops I have shared all dangers, all fatigues. Both in field and in my cabinet I shut all partiality from my soul and closed my eyes to personal comfort. With the robe of an empire I put on the mantle of care. I fed*faqirs* and holy men and gained their prayers. Those whose hands were raised against me have met my clemency. *Sri Purakhji* have been merciful to his servant." Maharaja's Sikh faith was entirely personal, officially it was a secular monarchy.

In such a climate no wonder that trade and commerce flourished at an unprecedented speed. Mohan Lal's account of the trade routes between Punjab and other countries, the mercantile operations is very significant. He says the roads were safe from robberies and the trade caravans moved securely from Multan to Peshawar and Kashmir, from Peshawar to Kabul, to Herat and Kandhar. There were five separate routes of trade between Sind and the frontiers of Ranjit Singh. Indigo was purchased at Multan at cheap rates and sold at Bokhara with a high margin of profit. The dates of Multan and the silk of Kashmir went upto China via Gobi desert. River transport was not expensive. The principal trade centres of Punjab were Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Peshawar, Shujabad, and Leiah. Lahore was famous for silk, woolen cloth, carpets, woodwork, and small arms. Amritsar was the centre of Shawl market, Hoshiarpur for ivory. Ladakhi shawls were a hit in Turkey, Uzbekistan, Persia and China. The Salt Mines of Khewra brought a substantial revenue. The Kohistani Namak

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was a rage in almost all the neighbouring countries.

There was no regular system of accounts before Ranjit Singh. It was Ramanand, the Banker, who was all in all. Ranjit Singh employed Lala Bhawani Dass, who brought order to the Punjab finances, set up a new Pay Office, avoided duplication of payments. Dewan Ganga Ram brought order in matters of Record Management of the state. The practice of using Turkish or Persian Calendar was dispensed with. Instead the Indian calendar, the system of hereditary inheritance of property. The Law of Escheat was done away with. The greatest boon of the Maharaja to the Punjabi cultivator was the ownership of the well, apart from the ownership of the land. On every well the name of the cultivator was engraved, something which was never done before him not even after Ranjit Singh.

Another great achievement of the Maharaja was that he abolished the institution of middlemen both in agriculture as well as industry. Officers charged with negligence and corruption were punished instantaneously. Even Governors were not spared. So much so, that Maharaja had given a letter to the chief Kotwal of Lahore not to hesitate in proceeding against the Maharaja himself if he were guilty of any indiscretion. Ranjit Singh might have been the only king in modern history to have done so. The Governor of Multan, Sawan Mal, arrested and imprisoned his own son for trampling the crop of a poor farmer. The Governor of Kashmir, Kirpa Ram was reprimanded for charging excessive revenue from one poor Kashmiri peasant. It may be remembered that the officers during the Mughal days were proverbially corrupt. The adage was, if the bitch of the Qazi died, the whole town went to the Qazi's house for mourning. But when the Qazi died nobody went. Justice during the Mughal times was an office of profit. Ranjit Singh reversed the process and made judicial appointments on merit, abolished the system of '*Nazrana*' and '*Shukrana*'. It was not the criminal but the crime which was punishable.

Ranjit Singh's patronage of commerce, industry, art and crafts brought about a good deal of urban development. It is remarkable that during the reign of Ranjit Singh there was no epidemic, no plague and no cholera. There was a chain of dispensaries where Unani medicines were given free of charge. People ate well and lived long. Maharaja was very fond of talking to senior citizens, particularly more than hundred years old people for whom he had special regard. Maharaja had the basic culture of mind although the culture of letters was denied to him. He looked upon his people with the same single eye. 'That is why', he once said, 'that God has taken away the light from the other'. No wonder, therefore, when he fell ill there were non-stop prayers in temples, mosques and gurdwaras for his recovery. If he were given a longer lease of life he would have made the Punjab a modern state.

The District Gazeteers of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sheikhupura prepared by

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British civil servants refer to prevalence of 'spoil system' in services. The fact, however, is that Ranjit Singh's Government was a Government of the talented, the meritorious. Ranjit Singh picked up men of humble origin who rose to high positions by sheer hard work, integrity and intelligence. These officers increased the productive efficiency of the state, multiplied its wealth, and made Punjab safer and healthier to live than the rest of Hindustan. The per capita income of an average Punjabi was much higher than that of his counterpart across the Jamuna. The contemporary Delhi Urdu *Akbhars* are full of stories of the Punjab, not merely victories in the battle but also successes in agriculture, industry, trade and commerce.

For the Muslims of the neighbouring states where their economic plight was miserable, Punjab proved to be a haven where life and property were more secure and protected. According to Fakir Waheeduddin, great grandson of Fakir Azizuddin, Maharaja's Foreign Minister, author of *Real Ranjit Singh* published in 1965 from Pakistan: "Among the top-ranking Muslim officers there were two ministers, one governor and several district officers. There were 41 high ranking Muslim officers in the army, two of them Generals, several of them Colonels and the rest holding important ranks. The revenue administration was mostly in the hands of Hindus, and traders were from all communities. The Muslim population of the Maharaja was governed by the Muslim Personal law, while the other communities were covered by their respective codes. Among his Muslim wives, there were five – Moran, Gul Begum, Teiboo, Junut and Gobe. These matrimonial alliances created a very congenial atmosphere in Punjab. It is because of his social vision, his economic measures coupled with his secular outlook that not a single communal riot took place in his reign of 40 years, no conversion, no second-class citizenship and no minority problem.

There were no reservations for posts. The key posts in civil and army were held by people of all castes and communities who donned the Lahore Durbar from all parts of the world – Muslims, Sikhs, Khatris, Brahmins from Kerala and Gwalior, Dogras from Jammu, Gurkhas from Nepal, Pathans from Peshwar, Bannu, Kohat and Kabul, and English, French, German, Italians, Spaniards, Russians, Americans. His court was cosmopolitan. So was his mind. These officers worked their way up, and most of them from the lowest rung of the ladder. Raja Dhian Singh, the Prime Minister of Lahore Darbar, rose from the position of a foot-soldier, Hari Singh Nalwa, Misr Beli Ram, Dewan Mokham Chand, Fateh Naseeb all rose from humble origins. To be of humble origin was a matter of pride in Maharaja's court. Pedigree and '*Khandaan*' were decried, hard work and merit counted. The three *Fakir* brothers, who virtually ruled Punjab, were sons of an ordinary physician of Lahore. Ilahi Baksh was merely a *Chob-i-Baaz*.

Maharaja's egalitarian outlook and his firm belief in the equality of mankind

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were an extension of his social and economic vision. His cosmopolitan outlook sprang from the same source. His strict adherence to secular ideals were directly incidental to the same roots. It was that friendly twinkle of his solitary eye which gave vision to his personality and performance so that his humanism outlived the boundaries of his empire. With Lenin and Lincoln, he shared the humility of a broad mind, the resolution of a big heart and the vision of the unity of his country. A protector of the poor and the weak, he established a state where the lion and lamb drank water from the same pool, where the strong were just and the weak secure, where the mind was free and the head was held high. It is because of this equality and plenty, which he gave to Punjab that he still lives in the imagination of the people.

Stressing this aspect of Maharaja's socialistic outlook, Fakir Waheed-ud-din says, "Ranjit Singh still lives, large as life, in the imagination of his people. He does so not where the Sikhs live now but also where they lived before, for the Muslim village-folks shared him as a legendary figure with the Sikhs, and they have not let him depart with the latter. The image that persists of him is that of a popular king well-known to his people through his frequent appearances in their midst, ready to listen to them, and to redress their grievances at all times, and looking upon all his subjects, irrespective of caste and creed, with one eye. That the one eye in his case was literally so, seems to have been the subject of innumerable good-natured jokes, which it is said, he would not only ask people to repeat in his hearing, but to which he himself contributed. There are even stories of this physical defect of his having been hurled at him with impunity by common people to drive home to him some grievances, which they had but he had not redressed personally. It is immaterial whether these stories are true or false. They can only have gained currency, because they fit in with Ranjit Singh's reputation." The poet who called him openly a one-eyed person (*kana*), was asked to repeat his couplet and was rewarded:

Teri Ikko Akh Sulakhani
Jeri Laatan Mare
Tenu Jhuk Jhuk karan Salamman
Do Akhan Wale
(Blessed is your single eye sparkling and illuminating
Making the two-eyed bend to salute you)

If socialism means state ownership and control of all means of production, distribution and exchange, Ranjit Singh was a socialist. But he went beyond socialism when he also encouraged private enterprise in industry including defence production. Principal industries under private enterprise included cotton, silk, textiles, saltpeter, arms, ammunition, leather goods, ornaments, utensils and paper. Sialkot excelled in paper industry, while Multan produced the finest silk. Maharaja established his first

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Foundry at Amritsar. Canons were cast in Punjab. Swords, spears, muskets, pistols, guns and all kinds of ammunition required for fire-arms, were manufactured by the state. According to Henry Fane, "The blades of Ranjit Singh's swords were in some instances valued at £ 1000, and the gold and jewels upon their hilts and scabbards at five times that sum." Different varieties of daggers such as 'Katar', 'Churra', 'Bicchua' and 'Peshkabz' were manufactured in Punjab. Ranjit Singh knew full well that no armies can fight on borrowed weapons, although he imported from France through his French Generals two million detonating contrivances particularly caps which are used in the manufacture of fire-arms particularly guns.

It must be remembered that Punjab under Ranjit Singh was a global player, and many European countries, particularly France and Russia, wanted to set up embassies at Lahore. The Punjabi goods were sold in Paris, Moscow and China, and the trade relations between Punjab and central Asian countries were very cordial. Boat manufacturing and salt mining were other important industries. Pind Dadan Khan and Attock were the centres of boat making. According to Shahmat Ali, a boat of 200 maunds cost Rs. 140/- while a 400 maund boat cost Rs. 400/-. When the Maharaja heard about English steam boats sailing in the Bay of Bengal, he sanctioned Rs. 40,000/- to General Ventura to build a Paddle Boat for him. The three Indus Navigation Treaties which the Maharaja concluded with the British, accelerated Punjab trade considerably. As a result of these treaties signed in 1832, 1834 and 1839, he sent 30-35 boat-loads of woolen shawls in foreign countries. The annual output of Shawl cloth in Kashmir was of the value of Rs. 35,00,000/-.

Maharaja was very proud of the salt mines of the Punjab, which yielded a revenue of more than 15 *lacs*. There were five salt mines in the neighbourhood of Pind Dadan Khan at Khewara, Khorah, Saroi, Jotna and the Makracha. Another salt mine was at Khoshab, but the salt found in Judi hill in the neighbourhood of Shamsabad was unique in taste and flavour, and it had medicinal value. Jacquemont was given Rs. 10,000/- to develop the salt mines and increase their output. Raja Gulab Singh was also involved in salt development. There were iron mines in Mandi and Suket, and copper and silver mines at Kullu. The mineral wealth of Punjab was a great attraction to East India Company, which looked upon the Punjab mines with coveteous eyes. The Maharaja fondly called the Khewara salt as *Safed Sona* (White Gold) the parallel of which is found only in Austria at Salzburg where people still go on a salt-mine tour wearing miner's clothes.

II

A Humanist to the Core

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One of those rare rulers who remained human even in inhuman situations, Ranjit Singh possessed an informal and yet a disciplined mind, a hilarious yet equable temperament, and humorous yet not given to levity. A man of unusual presence of mind and exceptional balance, he flung surprises even on the wittiest westerner and the most artful Englishman. When a Christian missionary known for his ecclesiastical subtlety, Dr Joseph Wolffe sent by the East India Company for ecclesiastical explorations in Punjab, asked him, "Your Excellency the people of your great country are very religious. Can you tell me what is the easiest way to reach God?" Ranjit Singh's only eye twinkled and he replied, "By concluding an alliance with the East India Company." The missionary cut short his Punjab visit and returned to Ludhiana by the first available transport.

Ranjit Singh loved life both in its agony and ecstasy with all its hope and anguish and joy. Like a typical Punjabi, he possessed robust common-sense and more robust sensibility. He never injured anybody's feelings and yet was a humourist of the finest order. And if he hated anything, it was the humbug and the hypocrisy. When his Muslim wife, Mohran, asked him where he was when God was distributing beauty he said, "I had gone in search of a kingdom." And what a kingdom he established, the like of which has not come up again!

The first foreigner to notice Maharaja's quick tongue was Charles Metcalfe who met him at Amritsar in 1809 at a time when the Treaty of Amritsar was being signed. William Bentinck, the Governor General of the East India Company, who met him at Ropar in 1831, also observed the Punjab Ruler's quick wit and repartee. So did Lord Auckland and his wily sister Emily Eden. A true son of the soil, his humour was an integral part of the Punjab character.

Telling jokes well was an art practised and patronised by the Lahore Darbar, and anyone who had the gift of the gab could try his luck. Prizes were awarded for the best banter and the most plausible burlesque. The Maharaja laughed, not because life was all a comedy, but because he found it too often funny. More often than not, he laughed at himself. The Punjabi poet who compared the kingly with the eye of justice was often asked to repeat his verse in which the Maharaja himself joined in laughter. And although the culture of letters is stated to have been denied to him, he had the basic culture of mind, which made up for the lack of so-called formal education.

There is a story of the Maharaja offering himself, in plain clothes, as a porter to an old man unable to carry his wheat-load of rations to his house during the hot month of June. There was a long queue and the old man was not content with ten *seers* of ration, because he would not be able to come time and again. He wanted atleast one *maund*. Ranjit Singh waited and carried the bag to the old man's house talking and comforting him on the way. While he was coming out, he was met by his bodyguard

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who was looking for him. The old man then recognised the Maharaja and felt very much embarrassed. Forbidding him to touch his feet, the Maharaja put him at ease saying, "Do not worry, Baba. It has breathed me well. This type of exercise is necessary for the rulers to keep them sound in body and mind, and indeed to keep them in constant touch with the people and reality." Ranjit Singh was a born socialist who believed that sovereignty belongs to the people.

Distorted by disease and short of height, he had marks of small-pox on his face. But he had a handsome soul, a human heart which palpitated at the slightest touch of humanity. He was specially kind to women and children. There are numerous legends of his kindness and compassion to helpless widows and handicapped persons. People used to stop him only to feel the touch of hands. Some village folks believed that the Maharaja had power of turning basemetal into gold. One such simple folk who stopped the Maharaja's passage was a hair blind woman. Before the Maharaja's soldiers could stop her, she had already rubbed her brass cooking pot over the royal clothes and spoiled them with soot and grease. She was cooking food when she heard the tinkling of the bells of the royal elephant and she ran out with the black pot without cleaning it. Looking at her and his clothes, the Maharaja asked, "Mai (mother) why have you spoiled my clothes?" The woman touched the hands of the Maharaja and replied crying, "Maharaja, cut off my head for spoiling your clothes but don't let your soldiers take away my cooking pan." "Why do you say so Mai?" "Because it must have turned into gold by your touch," she said.

"Yes, old mother it has turned into gold and nobody will take it away from you." The story survives that Ranjit Singh then had the pot filled with gold coins and ordered that she be sent to her house safely. She was a poor widow whose only son was killed in war before the Maharja came to power. If he knew the names of all the cash crops of all the villages of his empire, he also knew the names of war widows during his benevolent regime. He was a benevolent king, not a despot. He not only brought back the prosperity of Punjab but also its lost dignity and vanished pride.

Ranjit Singh loved beauty in all its forms and manifestations, physical as well as metaphysical. With every appearance of the new moon, he held poetical symposia. With every acquisition of a new he held a reception. He never chased or ran down a hare. He released many a bleating goat on way to the slaughterhouse. Once, when he heard a tigress wail for her cub which was caged, he passed a sleepless night and released the young one in the morning. Asked why, he said, "I could not bear the curse of a mother." With the first flush of monsoon he would order a 101-gun salute. Shooting a sailing swan and a singing nightingale was banned in Lahore.

Once a betel seller in a tipsy condition stopped the Maharaja's elephant in Anarkali Bazaar, Lahore and enquired, "How much for this ox?" Himself fond of drinks, the

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Maharaja let go the man at that time of the night with the stipulation that the man be produced in the court the following morning. In the full-dress darbar the next morning when the man was asked if he was still interested in buying the animal, the betel seller replied in typical Punjabi pose, "O king of kings, my nightly transactions are over." Saying that, he prostrated and presented the choicest leaf to his 'Badshah' who sent him off with a gift.

Himself a child of liberty, he conferred it as a gift on his subjects, so that his court and camp became a place where fools were allowed to make wise remarks on the foolish deeds of wise men. There was no place for the kill-joys, the dull-witted and the low-spirited. The jokes which glistened in the Lahore Darbar brought back the vanished glories of the days of Akbar. Like the court of Vikramaditya, Ranjit Singh's darbar acquired a reputation for intellectual debate and repartee. There used to be a turban competition in Lahore on the day of Basant Panchmi. Basant was one of the favourtie festivals of the Maharaja when he wore yellow clothes in tune with the season. There is a story of a youngman who won the cash prize of a hundred *mohrs* for wearing the most triangular turban in town. Challenging the amount of the royal, he demanded three times the prize money on the ground that it was the third day he was wearing the same turban. The Maharaja looked at the youth and his turban and fined him rupees two hundred on the ground that he had not washed his hair for two days. The youngman rushed for a bath. Humour in Punjab's heritage is one, which is not kept in lockers or safes. In Ranjit Singh's times the Punjabis were proud to possess it, preserve and enrich it.

Some Punjabi towns had special tang of their humour in Maharaja's days. The reputation of the women of Lahore for thrift and miserliness and their meanness in money matters was well-known. The vegetable women, of the birthplace of Ranjit Singh, were famous for their ribaldry and were not ashamed of their coarse humour. Their men, unbeatable in rural wit, used to put green spectacles on their bulls so that the animals take hay and straw as green grass.

"Why do you do that?" asked the Maharaja in one of his long morning horse-walk.

"Mahmud took away our green grass to Ghazni", replied the Jats.

"It will come back to Gujranwala with compound interest", the Maharaja assured his peasantry. History is witness that Ranjit Singh made Gujranwala Punjab's green belt, the most liable district in the then Punjab. Gujranwala retained its greenery and temperate climate even under the British rule, thanks to the foundations laid by the Maharaja.

The city of Amritsar was known for its trade and sophistication. After the din and noise of the day the citizens wanted a restful night. They used to stop their clocks

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to sleep well and to get rid of the tyranny of time. Some of them still do that. The highlight of these towns was that nobody living there resented their reputation. If you asked a man about the smallest egg in Punjab you knew that a joke about Gurdaspur was coming. The Maharaja enjoyed the hillman's jokes of Pathankot, the hill women's banter of Kangra, the jokes about the rice-eating dogras and the *shaljim* (turnip) eating people of Kashmir inviting every passerby to join in their *shaljim-degh*, a sort of community dish in a Langar-style.

On the battle-field, Ranjit Singh's quips were a legion, for he, like Napolean, wined and dined with his soldiers. When the claim of Hari Singh Nalwa was being hotly debated for the Governorship of Kashmir, a young Dogra shouted, "Also give him a pair of ploughs to level the flourishing valley of Kashmir." The Maharaja at once understood the hint and dropped the idea.

It is well known that Ranjit Singh had employed a number of European officers such as Allard, Ventura, Avitibile to train the Punjab armies. When some Sikh *sardars* objected to the European drill and called it 'Raks-i-Lalluan' (dance of the old women), Maharaja snapped back, "If all the youngmen of Punjab learnt this dance, the old woman of British imperialism could be driven as far away as Jamuna."

The stories of the *Mirasis* (drum-beaters), folk singers and musicians who took liberties with the Maharaja, are a legion. Actually it was a *Mirasi* who lampooned him as a one-eyed dove. Here was a Punjabi tribe whose sole heritage was humour. Not only heritage but their livelihood was humour. The Maharaja gave liberal grants to the *Bhands* (the Punjabi bufoons), the *Bahuroopias* (actors), *Madaris* (jugglers), the *Bazigars* (acrobats), *Rababis* (harpers), *Naqarchis* (flute players). Even the *Sansis* (shephards and hunters) and *Kanjars* (breeders of harlots) were patronised. The *Dooms* and the *Doomnis* (dancing girls of Dogras) from the hill states were given employment. The *Kalandars* (mendicants), the *Malangs* (friars) and the *Dervishes* (wandering yogis) had a heyday, for the Maharaja considered them as promoters of culture who raised the level of life from mere biological to the aesthetic plane.

An adept in voice-culture, a *Mirasi* would often come un-invited to any wedding from the poorest to the richest including the royal weddings and other ceremonies to provide fun and frolic to the people present. A *Rabab* was to a *Mirasi* what *Bansari* is to a *Banjara* (nomad). Ranjit Singh had great regards for the *Rababis,* because it was a *Rababi*, Mardana, who accompanied Guru Nanak in his several travels. A Roger De Coverly, a Micawber and a Tony Lumpkin rolled into one, a *Mirasi* was a *Banka* (fop) of the erstwhile Punjab whose cultural idiosyncrasies were pronounced. "Hey you one-eyed fellow, where did you pick up that he-buffalo?" asked a *Mirasi* stopping the king's elephant. "It is the same you presented to me." The *Mirasi* blessed the king and went his way.

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The story of the Muslim calligraphist who came to Lahore to get a reward for his life's work, the Holy Quran, is more poignant. When the Muslim princes of Rampur, Lucknow, Bhopal and Hyderabad could not pay him the price he demanded, he had turned to a Sikh and had travelled all the way to Lahore to try his luck. Ranjit Singh, it is said, got up from his gold-coated cane chair, touched the Holy Book reverentially and asked his Finance Minister to pay the amount the calligraphist demanded, ten thousand gold *mohrs*. Fakir Aziz-ud-din, the Foreign Minister, who was present there asked, deeply touched, "*Izzat Maa'ab* (protector of the dignity of the poor), why are you paying such a fabulous price for a book which does not belong to your religion?" Ranjit Singh's only eye twinkled and he said, "Fakirjee, God had ordained that I should look upon all religions with the same single eye. Perhaps that is why He took away the light from my other eye."

Bismarck of Punjab

No defence scientist as understood in the modern sense, the Maharaja had a scientific mind, a scientific outlook. As a general of generals, he knew that he must possess his own weapons because he was aware that one day the war with the British was inevitable.

Accordingly, he set up his own arsenals and foundries at Amritsar, Sialkot and Lahore for casting guns and for the manufacture of shells. Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, who was the best scientific brain in the empire, established the first Punjab Foundry. When Lehna Singh produced the first shell in Punjab Foundry, he was given an award of Rs. 30,000/-, the Khalsa *rupee*. When Lehna Singh produced the first Punjabi 'Fuse', another reward of rupees five thousand followed. If Lehna Singh were alive today he might have been listed for a Nobel Prize. It must be remembered that Lehna Singh was the one who sailed the first steam-boat in the river Ravi at Lahore. A genius in higher mathematics, he was the right hand man of the Maharaja to disposses the common man of fire-arms.

Lehna Singh carried his defence knowledge lightly on his shoulders. Other names which are responsible for the modernisation of Punjab armies are Charhat Singh, his grandfather, who modernised matchlocks and Mahan Singh, his father, who conquered Kotli Ahangran, a suburb of Sialkot which was the headquarters of the erstwhile kings for the manufacture of firearms. Ranjit Singh also realised that the Punjab armies must be properly trained in warfare. He, therefore, employed European military officers who were retrenched after the Battle of Waterloo. In all, he employed 42 European officers popularly called 'Gora Officers' such as General Ventura, Allard, Court, Avitabile, and Honiberger, who were responsible for giving a new look to the Punjab armies.

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The *Fauj* (army) had three main wings, viz *Fauj-i-Khas* (special force), *Fauj-e-Quwaid* (trained force) and *Fauj-e-Be-Quwaid* (untrained force). There was no regular army organisation in the days of *misls*. Ranjit Singh created such an organisation of which he was the leader. In fact, he was the general of generals to whom every general looked up for leadership and guidance. It is necessary to mention here that Ranjit Singh was against both the Mughal *Mansabdari* System as well as the *Misldari* one.

Ranjit Singh's benevolence sprang from his strength, not only military strength but also economic strength. And since he firmly believed in the commonwealth and the democracy of the Khalsa, he can be called a Bismark and the Garibaldi rolled in one. It is his benevolence minus his autocracy or despotism that enabled him to shape the course of modern India not only in its political boundaries but also in its economic and industrial aspect.

When Ranjit Singh entered the city of Lahore as a victor, he took a round of the town. When he entered the famous garden in the Punjab capital, he asked, "Why is this garden called Shalamar Bagh?" "Because Shalamar in Persian means killer of love," replied the Gardener. "This is Punjab, not Persia. Love is kindled here, not killed. From today onward, the Bagh would be known as Shali Bagh (Garden of the Beloved)." In the reign of Ranjit Singh, love was forever kindled. The Punjabi love legends such as Sohini Mahiwal, Heer Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Mirza Sahiban, Sehti Murad were re-written and given a new lease of life. Punjabi theatre was revived. The Punjabi motto was freedom, dignity and happiness. People lived in the present, and were full of hope for the future. Only in Punjab you found a father stealing sheep and his son bearing witness against him. Such was the upright conduct of the Punjab peasantry, and such was the plain speaking which prevailed in the land of five rivers, when the rest of Indian princes vied with each other to lick the British boot of the Company lords.

Maharaja's greatest regret was he could not unite the whole of Punjab because of the treachery of the Cis-Satluj chiefs who fell at the feet of Col. Ochterlony and begged him to save them from the advancing lion. Those who shattered the Maharaja's dream of unification of Punjab included chiefly the Maharajas of Patiala, of Jind, of Kaithal, Nabha and Kalsia, in fact all the Malwa chiefs totalling 38 in number. Some of them went even to Delhi and fell at the feet of Lord Lake to take them in the Company's protection. The Treaty of Amritsar 1809 shattered the Maharaja's ambition to see a united Punjab as a sovereign state. The Treaty which was observed as a Black Day by Dewan Mokham Chand and others fixed Ranjit Singh's territories only upto river Sutlej near Phillaur. The Proclamation of Protection dated May 3, 1809, sounded the death knell of the idea of a full-fledged independent Punjab state. It is the traitor-chiefs of these states, which spread all kinds of rumours, to please their British masters,

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that Ranjit Singh was a despot and the common man was unhappy because of his excessive revenue exactions. It is an irony of history that the truth lies in exactly its opposite.

Extraordinary Ruler

The Maharaja was a man of the world, no saint. Though far removed from being handsome, he took pride in being surrounded by handsome people. From all foreign accounts, Ranjit Singh's court excelled itself in the world as the court with the finest looking and most well dressed courtiers. The Maharaja took delight in the ordinary pleasures of life and yet was an extraordinary man and more extraordinary ruler. In the words of Princep, "Never was so large an empire founded by one person with so little criminality." According to Osborne, military Secretary to Lord Auckland, "He has never been known to take life though his own life has been attempted more than once." Dr Drummond, surgeon to the Governor General says, "The Maharaja is blessed with a quick talent in reading men's that he was mild and merciful and that his reign will be found freer from any striking acts of cruelty and oppression than those of many more civilised monarchs."

An excellent judge of human character, the Maharaja surprised the French Botanist, Jen Jaques Jacquemont, who had come to Punjab to collect the rarest roses, that he was not an Englishman because he could see that from his face. Absolutely taken aback, the Parisinian plant collector asked, "How did you judge that, Your Excellency, if I am allowed to satisfy my curiosity?" The Maharaja looked into the catty eyes of the traveller and said, "An Englishman would not have changed his posture twenty times, he would have made no gesture while talking, he would not laugh out-of-turn, sometimes in his own turn."

A good talker, he never wasted his words. A keen hunter, he never shot an animal twice. Whenever his men returned with the produce of their sport he critically examined every kill, counted the numbers of balls each had received, and when he found one killed by a single shot he exclaimed, "That's it – a good shot." And when he found one which was a good deal mangled, he would say, "Bad that, very bad." The same criterion he applied to jokes. "Narrating a joke is like shooting a bird," he often said, "If you dissect a joke, what you get is its body, not the bird." He never repeated his witty remarks for their beauty lay in subtlety.

Ranjit Singh upheld the principle of equality in all its aspects and, in consequence, he enriched its contents and enlarged its scope. For the first time in Punjab's history, he made Punjabi a living language, although Persian continued to be the official language and was on the way out.

Writing sixty years after the Maharaja's death, Griffin says, "His name is a

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household name in the province. His portrait is preserved in the castle and the cottage. He is still a favourite theme with the ivory artists of Amritsar! Lord of the legend, he is the eternal Punjabi hero in the song and the fable." Why sixty years, Mr. Griffin? Even 178 years after his death, he is still the king of the mind of Punjab.

And yet he believed in Destiny. When Osborne asked him the secret of his easy success over other Sikh chiefs, Ranjit Singh smiled and said, "Ah, that was my Destiny. It was written on my forehead and must have come to pass." Osborne is convinced that the Maharaja's mind was one of those, which seemed destined by nature to win their way to distinction, and achieve greatness. "His courage was of that cool and calculating sort, which courted no unnecessary danger, and shunned none which his purposes made it expedient to encounter, and he always observed a just proportion between his efforts and his objects. Gifted with the intuitive perception of character, and a comprehensive knowledge of human nature, it was by the overhauling influence of his superior mind, that he contrived gradually, almost insensibly and with resistance, not only to reduce the proud and high spirited chiefs of his nation to the condition of his subjects, but to render them to the devoted adherents of his person, and the firm supporters of his throne (on which he never sat). He never exhausted his strength in wild and hazardous enterprises, but retaining his ambition within the limits of reasonable probability, they were not only so well-timed and skillfully arranged, but failure, (in rare cases when they did fail), or impaired his resources. He seemed to have a lively, fanciful and ingenious mind, but the ceremonious part of the Indian etiquette, and the figurative and the hyperbolical style of oriental intercourse. Ranjit Singh, however, had a natural shrewdness, sprightliness and vivacity, worthy of a more civilised and intellectual state."

The State and the Empire

Ranjit Singh established a state where the strong are just and the weak secure, where the mind is free and the head is held high. Ranjit Singh's title to greatness lies in the fact that he converted the warring bands of Punjab into a proud Punjabi community, disciplined its energies and established a state based on the principles of humanism, secularism and toleration. The Maharaja could have easily taken revenge from those who persecuted the Sikhs, hanged two of their Gurus, Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur, bricked alive two minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh. But he did not do that. On the contrary, he invited the Muslims to participate in the new democratic experiment. He trusted the Muslims and they in return justified his trust. The Muslim contribution in setting up a Punjabi State is inestimable. In every crisis, they stood by him through thick and thin. In fact, it will not be wrong to say that Ranjit Singh alone solved the Muslim problem successfully whereas all other regimes, particularly the

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subsequent regimes have failed to do so.

It must be remembered that Ranjit Singh was only a 'Misaldar' of Gujranwala principality, which he transformed into a great empire of 2,00,000 square miles yielding an annual revenue of *rupees* more than three *crores* including the salt-mines whose revenues were quite substantial. Foreign powers vied with one another to establish embassies in Lahore – The Czar, the French monarch, the Kings of Nepal and Burma and many more Indian Nawabs, such as, Nizam of Hyderabad. The Gora officers whom he had employed gave the Punjab armies the much needed discipline. Besides, while Allard introduced carbine in the Lahore armies, Ventura sailed Punjab's first steam-boat in the river Ravi. Allard's yellow dragoons and Ventura's scarlet red jackets gave Punjab armies a distinctive look. Court and Avitabile helped in the manufacture of shells and setting up of Punjab's first Gun factory. The Gora officers, 32 in number, were happy living in Punjab with their families. They loved Punjab, its flora and fauna, its rivers and climate, and above all, its benevolent and tolerant ruler. Their opinion can be summed up in what Avitabile told Major Mackeson, "We prefer the Sikhs, they are so simple-minded and have no religious prejudices as the Persians and the Afghans have."

It would thus be seen that the state which the Maharaja established was not a Communal Sikh State, nor a military dictatorship, nor a 'Krieggstat', i.e., a state which sustains on loot or robbery. By all accounts it was a welfare state with secular outlook or, as a historian V.A. Smith calls it, "A partnership with other communities". Though unlettered, the drafts of the greatest scholar of the time, Fakir Aziz-ud-din, his Foreign Minister, were sent earlier by Maharaja. Maharaja was a man with modern outlook. He established the first printing press in Punjab, he sent young Punjabis to Ludhiana to learn English. He gave patronage to both Allopathy, Homeopathy, Unani and Ayurvedic medical sciences. In spite of the superstitions of his courtiers, he stood for modern knowledge.

The dialogue he had with the English missionary, Joseh Wolffe, on the subjects such as Hell, Heaven, God is revealing. "You say you travel in distant lands for the sake of religion. Why then do you not preach to the English in Hindoostan who have no religion?" When Wolffe conveyed it to the Governor General, Lord William Bentick, he sighed and said, "This is, alas, the opinion of all natives all over India." Ranjit Singh further cornered the English evangelist by reminding him, "If you are a man of God, why did you scream in the boat while crossing the river Indus on a suspension Bridge on an elephant?"

Ranjit Singh was deeply religious but not suppositious. On a number of occasions, he did not act according to the advice given by Madhusudan, the Keralite astrologer in his court. He believed firmly in the Guru Granth Sahib, which he consulted before

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undertaking any expedition, before taking any major political decision and, before committing himself to the foreigners, particularly the English. According to a European observer, "Though by profession a Sikh, in religion he is a skeptic, and it is difficult to say whether his superstition is real, or only a mask assumed to gratify and conciliate his people."

Maharaja's dialogues with the American missionary, Lourie, who came to Punjab to establish American schools, are more revealing. His full name was Rev. John C. Lourie. Maharaja, in fact, had no faith in the Padres, only contempt for them.

III

'Khuda Hum Khalsa Shud'

During my visit to Pakistan in 1983 as a member of the Indo-Pak Joint Panel, in my capacity as Director in the Ministry of Education & Culture, I was pleasantly surprised to observe that the people in Pakistan regarded Ranjit Singh as 'their' king in whose rule Punjab regained its lost glory. The guide at Lahore Fort described Ranjit Singh as the bravest and the most benevolent king of the 19th century. During the whole tour, he never forgot to prefix 'Maharaja' with Ranjit Singh, and insisted that everyone in the delegation should do it. He said that the Punjab peasantry still remembered their king in whose rule the king and the cobbler sat on the same charpoy, the *Jawan* (soldier) and the *Kisan* (farmer) shared the same *thali* (Mate).

Even during his conquests, he was regarded more as a liberator than as conqueror, much less an invader. At Peshawar, Jamrud, Kabul, Multan and Kashmir, wherever his soldiers went, they were treated as friends and not as foes. History is a witness that when the 28-year-old Ranjit Singh, on 19th November, 1818, seated on an elephant rode through the streets of Peshawar the holy men of the town blessed the Maharaja who had never seen a victor bowing before them. The rebellious tribesman saw the spectacle and exclaimed – "*Khuda Hum Khalsa Shud*" (God is on the side of the Khalsa). The conduct of Punjabi soldiers under Colonel Shaikh Baswan who carried the Maharaja's flag across the Khyber and participated in the victory parade at Kabul in 1839 was so praiseworthy that the Afghan king held a special banquet in honour of Punjab soldiers.

Mohan Lal, an English educated Delhi youngman, who accompanied Sir Alexander Burnes in his mission to Kabul, and who published his Travels from London in 1846 gives an eye-witness account which is full of praise for the Punjabi soldiers and their monarch. Ranjit Singh, he told the Persian king, was not a man, he was a movement which stands for liberty, equality and dignity. Mohan Lal's account is important because it is the first account of an Indian in the employment of East India Company of kingdom typically Indian and an eye-sore to the British Government. He

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has narrated many incidents, but one of them is worth repeating, the one which took place in the North-West Frontier town:

Justice

Justice in the days of Ranjit Singh was not an economic commodity as it was in the medieval and the Mughal times. The Mughal 'Qazi' was proverbially corrupt. According to a popular saying, "If the bitch of the Qazi died, the whole town went for mourning, but when the Qazi himself died nobody ever went." The Mughal judges extracted 'Shukrana' from the winner, 'Jurmana' from the loser and 'Nazrana' from everyone.

Ranjit Singh considered justice as his religious duty, his moral and human responsibility. The Maharaja used to say that the only divine element in kingship was justice. From all available accounts it appears that the Maharaja combined in him the functions of an ordinary court and that of the highest court. Many tales survive where the Maharaja held the court sitting on a horseback, on a charpoy. Often during his morning rides he held the court mobile. There were no tedious briefs of cases, no subtle interpretations of law, no methodised forms, no harangues. Decisions were quick, justice was speedy. A living embodiment of the adage, "Justice delayed is justice denied", justice was a passion with him. Although, he did not install any 'Bell of Justice', he held aloft the torch of independence of judiciary. No king in the whole history of the world had claimed equality with his subjects by giving a letter to the Chief Kotwal of Lahore with instructions that he should not hesitate to proceed against the Maharaja, should he be found guilty of any offence. The result was that justice, which was the source of revenue for the state, became its fundamental responsibility. No matter was too great or too small to be brought to the personal attention of the Maharaja. Sometimes even conjugal conflicts of the courtiers were decided by him.

There are so many stories and tales and legends about the benevolent Maharaja and all of them may not be true. However, there is no story about his despotism, about his cruelty to mankind or even to animals, no legend about his tyranny towards the weaker section or the minorities. The story which is being narrated below may be pure fiction but it is symbolic of the mind of the man who still rules us although he is not physically present amongst us. A woman, it is said, came to Lahore Darbar all the way from Peshawar, saying "*Dohai Sarkar, Dohai*" (protection, my king protection). That she said amidst wails. She said she had been de-flowered by his soldiers and that she wanted justice.

With a head bent low in shame, the Maharaja listened to the wailing woman, unsheathed his sword and said, "Take this sword and kill me." The courtiers were stunned but nobody dared to speak a word. "Put it back, Sarkar, you are the king. I

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want justice and you alone can do it. Find out the culprit and punish him." The legend lingers that the Maharaja held an Identification Parade and the woman recognised the soldier. Placing the sword at the feet of the lady, Ranjit Singh said, "Avenge your insult." The lady looked at the remorse in the eyes of the ruler and said, "Since the death-penalty does not exist in your empire, blacken his face, parade him in the streets so that others learn a lesson." "You are merciful, mother. For this heinous crime I would have waived all my laws." The soldier spent the rest of his life in a solitary cell in total repentance. The story, like many other stories may not be true but it shows the reputation of the Maharaja for justice. Incidentally, the lady being a Muslim symbolises the fact that the state the Maharaja established was not a Sikh state, but a Punjabi state in which everyone was equal, irrespective of caste, creed or sex.

Ranjit Singh has been erroneously compared to Caesar and Napoleon. Both of them established absolute despotism even though Napoleon was the child of French Revolution. Yet he set aside all the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and established a monarchy no less than the Bourbans of history.

Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, was a product of a movement called a 'People's Dictatorship'. Here the ruler is the 'People of Punjab,' not the ruler of Punjab. When Ranjit Singh nominated Prince Kharak Singh as his successor, Hari Singh Nalwa reminded him that he was a trustee of Punjab which belongs to the Khalsa and not to any individual.

Sir Henry Fane who came to attend the marriage of Prince Nau Nihal Singh on 5th March, 1837 at Lahore wrote:

> "Ranjit Singh among his subjects has the character generally of a kind and a generous master and one of the best princes that have ever reigned in India. As evidence of his being really a good and amiable man may be cited his kindness to children... and the fact of his never having, since he conquered the country, put a man to death for even the most heinous crime. To his vanquished foes, he always showed consideration and clemency. He is thus an example, in the early 19th century India, of an independent Indian sovereign – the only one in that age who founded a just and humane system of government on principles that we now call 'secular'."

In contrast, the British India was notorious for its *Pindaris* and thugs, Punjab was almost free from crime where penalties such as mutilation of limbs and death simply did not exist. A lion on the battlefield, he had a tender heart. He loved to hear the song of the nightingale, the orchestra created by the chirping of sparrows. He did not allow his hounds to chase the hares during his various hunting expeditions. He considered it unmanly to shoot an animal from a distance or from behind. He believed in equality in the battle, equality in peace, equality in administration of justice. A true socialist, he was the people's king who cared so much for the weak and the defenceless,

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the injured and the insulted, the poor and the aged, irrespective of caste, colour, creed and gender.

Thus we find that in the long dreary desert of despotism from the river Rhine to Hwag Ho including the British India, Ranjit Singh's Punjab, the land of five rivers, was the only oasis where men and women lived in dignity, where nobody was the 'first citizen', where everyone was equal and nobody more equal, where in the words of Mohammed Iqbal where the king and the slave stood in the same row, with the only difference that although there was the 'king', there was no slave in Punjab. That way Ranjit Singh comes closer to Lincoln who said, "I shall not be a slave because I shall not be a master." Lincoln's letter to his C-in-Chief and Ranjit Singh's letter to Chief Kotwal Lahore are the only two documents in the history of the world where Heads of the state have authorised to proceed against them if they were found guilty of any indiscretion. Is it not extraordinary that not a single Muslim was converted to Sikhism in Punjab during Maharaja's rule? In a larger historical perspective, Ranjit Singh was neither a dead mental principle nor an empty political vow. He had the madness of a musician, the vision of a statesman, the mind of a human being and above all the pulse-beat of his times. His benign policies paved the way for rural as well as urban development of Punjab. A typical Punjab town was recognised by its particular trade or industry. Before Ranjit Singh, Punjab was unknown except a producer of wheat and women for the invaders; he made it a global concern. Lahore, Multan, and Peshawar acquired international status in trade and commerce. That gave enormous self-confidence to the Punjabis suppressed for centuries. Beggary was unknown in Punjab, no one was hungry, no one was workless. Poverty was completely wiped out. No wonder that there was no poverty-alleviation programme in his more than a hundred schemes to help the *jawan* and the *kisan*. There was plenty and prosperity in Punjab and people led an honourable life, irrespective of caste, community or religion. It is this picture of the Maharaja which has to be un-veiled.

In view of the above, Ranjit Singh is waiting for his Boswell, A Washington Irving, a Deil/ Dale Carnegie. The known Ranjit Singh is too well-known. What is required is the un-known Ranjit Singh, who is buried in the debris of history. Never was a benign and a benevolent ruler forgotton so soon by its own people.

I would like to conclude this chapter with a poem by a friend, a renowned Urdu poet, Nadaan, who recited it at the time of the release of my book,*Maharaja Ranjit Singh* on November 2, 1980 at the Press Club of India, New Delhi, to commemorate the 200th birth anniversary of the Maharaja. Entitled *Vo Aankh* (That Eye), it reads as follows:

Tere Moarukh Teri Hakumat ke Roz-o-Shab ko
Hazaar Aankhon se Delhi Bethey

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Magar Shakast-i-Nazar ka Matam
Para Hua Hai Safon mein unki
Ye Beed un tak nahin Khula hai
Key Teri Tanveer Kis Sitare ki Abroo thi

(Your historians have viewed your reign
With a thousand eyes, from a thousand angles
But their vision is distorted
And they are unable to spot the star
To which you have lent your luster)

Vo Aankh Kya Thi
Key Jis Key Bal Par
Shikast Di Tu Ney Mehr-o-Ma Ko
Key Jis Key Halqe mein Taj-i-Shahi
Faqir ka Dil Bana Hua Tha
Jo Korey Kagaz mein jazab tehrir parh rahi thi

(What was that eye on whose resilience
you outshone the sun and the moon
Which viewed the Crown with
A Mendicant's heart
Read the writing on a blank sheet
Anticipate the conspiracies of Time)

Vo Aankh Kya Thi jo Apni Awargi par pehre Bitha key Azad ho gayi thi
Jo Chashm-i-Dehkan mein
Tiairte Aansooyon ka Tirath Bani Huyi Thi
Jo Nachti Thi Jo Khelti Thi
Shrir Bachon ki Tara
Baarish Key Paniyon Sey

(What was the eye that acted as its sentinel on its own vagrancy
A darling of the peasant's eye, a pilgrimage of his flowing tears
The eye which played and danced in the pattern of rains
Like naughty children)

Magar Mein Sha yar Hoon
Tere Dil Ki Har Dharkan Ko Sun Raha hoon
Mein Jaanta hoon key teri tan veer kis sitare ki abroo hai
Mujhe to itna hi poochna hai
Key mere waqton ki teergi mein
Us aankh ka kab zahoor hoga
Key ji key bal par

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Shikast di tu ne Mehr-o-Ma' ko
(But poet as I am
I can hear every beat of your heart
I am aware of the star to which you lent your
Entire luminosity
I only want to know this much
When will that eye-reappear
To dispel the darkness of my time
The eye on whose strength
You outshone the Sun and the Moon)

– Dr. K. K. Khullar

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Bibliography with Critical Notes

1 *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* (Persian) by Lala Sohan Lal Suri, the Akhbar-Nawis of Lahore Darbar. First published by his son at Lahore in 1889 in English in 5 volumes from 1469 to 1849, the number has been enlarged in 1974 by V.S. Suri of Punjab Archives. The Suri family has rendered invaluable service to Ranjit Singh and his times. By all accounts, it is a faithful account of Maharaja's eventful life. Without 'Umdat' it is impossible to re-enact the vanished times of the Maharaja's benign rule. The most important even of Ranjit Singh, i.e., the capture of Lahore on July 7, 1799, by an 18-years old general has not been described so vividly by any other historian. Umdat is also known by the popular name of 'Roznamcha', a day-to-day account of Ranjit Singh's rule.

2 *Zafarnama-e-Ranjit Singh* by Ganesh Das Wadehra, a contemporary account which is indispensable for any history-writer. This is dated 1876.

3 *Char Bagh-e-Punjab* by Ganesh Das Wadehra, a contemporary account which is absolutely necessary for the understanding of Maharaja's mind. All the three accounts are silent on Ranjit Singh's so-called coronation celebrated by the Punjab Government and the Punjabi University.

4 *Sketch of the Sikhs*(1812) by Sir John Malcolm: Being one of the earliest accounts on Sikh religion it is important to study in the evolution and development of the Sikh empire.

5. *Origin of Sikh Power in the Punjab and the Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (1834) by H.T. Princep. The author devoted 7 chapters on the various facets of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his relations with the English upto 1831 when he retired from service. He called Ranjit Singh as 'That exceptionally astute individual', 'a rare ruler'.

6 *Tawarikh-e-Sikhan* (1811) by Khushwaqt from 1797-1811, this source is invaluable.

7 *Ranjit Singh* (1933) by S.R. Kohli. This is excellent source book and is indispensable for the study and understanding of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

8 *Tawarikh-e-Punjab* by Bute Shah (1848). Bute Shah whose original name was Gulam Mohiuddin was in the service of the British at Ludhiana and wrote his book at the orders of Col. OchyerIony. Obviously this is not a very reliable source. Yet it is a source because it is contemporary.

9 *Zafar-Nama* by Kanhaya Lal. Apart from Maharaja's conquests it throws light on the social and economic life of those days.
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10 *Jang-i-Multan* by Ghulam Jilani: It is a first rate account of Maharaja's conquest of Multan. It is here in the victory Jashan that the cabaret dancer Mohran took the Maharaja's heart. The Maharaja later married her. First he sought forgiveness of the Almighty for his deed and later struck coin in her honour. The coin bore a figure of she-peacock. The newly married couple also paid a visit to Haridwar immediately thereafter. They stayed there for a fortnight. On his return journey at Varanasi the Maharaja bent low at Vishwanath Mandir and donated ten maunds of gold. Mohran died young and lies buried in a fort at Pathankot.

11 *Osborne's Diary* (1838): William Osborne was the military secretary to Lord Auckland, the Governor General of India. It is full of interesting anecdotes portraying the human side of the Punjab ruler. I quote one interesting dialogue between the Maharaja and Osborne. It occurs on pages 72-73 of the diary and is dated: July 8, 1838:
"Is Lord Auckland married?" "No." "What, he has no wives at all?" "None." "Why does he not marry?" "I don't know." "Why don't you marry?" "I can't afford it." "Are English wives very expensive?" "Yes sir." "I wanted one for myself sometime ago I wrote to the Government about it, but they did not send me one." "It would be difficult to find one in this country that would suit your Highness." "Are there any in England?" "Plenty." "Ah, I often wish for one."

12 *Ranjit Singh* (1935) by N.K. Sinha published by the University of Calcutta. It is pioneering work on the Maharaja and must find a pride of place in any bibliography. Sinha's analysis of the Maharaja's relationship to the Khalsa was not like the seeming him: "Ranjit's deference to the Khalsa was not like the seeming deference shown by Julius and Augustus Ceasar to the name of Roman Republic, when they established Ceasarism. The Senate was at that time, to all intents and purposes dead, whereas the Sikh religion was in Ranjit's time fully alive and the Khalsa a reality."

13 *Land Revenue Administration In Punjab - Past & Present* (1971 reprint) in two volumes. It is an excellent account of Ranjit Singh's agrarian reforms.

14 *Transformation of Sikhism* (1956) by Gokul Chand Narang. It is a standard work on the subject.

15 *A History of the Sikhs* (1981) published by S. Chand & Compnay, edited by HLO Garrett.

16 *A History of the Sikh People* (1469-1988) by Dr Gopal Singh published by World Book Centre, New Delhi.

17 *The History of the Sikhs* in 5 volumes reprinted in 1999 by Munshiram Manoharlal by Dr Hari Ram Gupta.

18 *Peasantry & State – Early Nineteenth Century Punjab* (2000) by Dr Radha Sharma, Head Ranjit Singh Chair, GND University, Amritsar.

19 *History of Punjab* by Mohammed Latif (1891). Latif's description of Ranjit Singh's personality is penetrating, particularly his respect for the learned in spite of the fact that he himself was educated. "He entertained great respect for learning and the learned men. His secretaries were in perpetual attendence and he had papers read out to him in Persian, Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi, and he saw to it that the drafts met his views. His appearance was pre-possessing, his manners and address was delightful and his features were full of animation of expression. His remaining eye was large, quick and searching, and its fire and brilliancy displayed atonce the great acuteness and energy of the mind of its owner."

20 *Up the Country* (1866) by Emily Eden, sister of Lord Auckland who met the Maharaja in 1837. Her account of Punjab and its Maharaja is not only interesting for a journalist but almost scandalous for the historian. Her sketch of Ranjit Singh does not resemble the real Ranjit Singh at all. She describes her brother as 'teetotaler' which is not a fact. She says the Maharaja passed on a cup of country liquor to her. Writes Miss Eden, "One drop of which burnt the outside of my lips. But since she was on Maharaja's blind side, she poured it on the drugget. Thoroughly impressed with the English lady's

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capacity for Punjabi drinks, he filled her cup with many more such drinks, while the nautch girls sang and danced." This account is not very authentic.

21 *The Punjab* by Col. Steinback (1845). A critical study of this source should convince anyone that the account is partial and written at the Company's behest.

22 *Sikhs and the Afghans* (1847) by Shahamat Ali is an important source of information of Maharaja's times, particularly on the military history of Punjab. According to the book, the Maharaja had 31 Regiments of the Infantry, 9 Regiments of the Infantry, 288 pieces of the Great Artillery with 11,800 irregular Sawars. The cost of maintaining this huge force, according to this source, was 1, 27, 96, 482 which came a little more than one third of the state's total income.

23 *Manuscript .Number* 622 *entitled Hisabnama Fauj-e-Ranjit Singh; Khuda Baksh Library, Patna* (Author Unknown) is a very important source on Ranjit Singh's army. Divided in three parts, Cavalry, Infantry and artillery, it is an excellent analysis of Maharaja's military system. It gives an exact percentage of Muslim officers in the Sikh armies, their rank, pay, addresses and other details. Besides the military reforms introduced by Ranjit Singh are all there.

24 *Ranjit Singh and his Generals* (1976) by Lt. Col. Gulcharan Singh. It is a very important source based on original writings where the author traces the greatness of Maharaja as a 'General of Generals': particularly the contributions made by Dewan Mokham Chand whom Ranjit Singh called 'Chacha', the terror for the British and the maker of the Khalsa Empire; Misr Dewan Chand and Hari Singh Nalwa. All of them won laurels for their Master in distant lands. Charles Metcalfe called Mokham Chand 'a fire-eating war monger' who always wanted Ranjit Singh to cross Sutlej in his life-time. He was Maharaja's right-hand man who carried Maharaja's arms to the frontier, the Pathan country and inflicted the first ever defeat to the Afghans at Attock avenging the humiliation of 800 years at the hands of Mahmud of Ghazni in 1002 AD. He built the fort of Phillaur from where he gazed at British-protected territories, the cis-Sutlej states, the states which stabbled in the back of Ranjit Singh to fulfil his ambition of a united Punjab. Comrade-in-arms of the Maharaja in all his campaigns from 1806 to 1814 when he suddenly died at Phillaur on October 29 that year.

The contribution of Misr Diwan Chand in the making of the Sikh Empire has been under-estimated by the British historians who have described him as a 'Hookah-smoking General'. That Ranjit Singh had allowed him this concession only testifies to the liberality of the Maharaja and that the fact he established was not a Sikh State, it was a People's State with a People's King where man was more important than the monarchy. The Battle of Naushera (1823) executed by Misr Dewan Chand. An able strategist and an excellent swordsman he fell fighting on July 18, 1825 in the Frontier. When Ranjit Singh received news of his death he wept and adjourned his Darbar for the day.

The case of Hari Singh Nalwa stands on a different footing for he was a rare General in rare times performing rare deeds. Although the British records paint him as a ferocious boor, he was a great General comparable only with the world's greatest in the field such as Napolean and Nelson and Shivaji and Pratap. The Peshawar District Gazette (1897) describes Nalwa's achievements thus:

"In such awe were visitations held that the name was used by Afghan mothers as a term of affright to hush their unruly children. But lately old grey beards were alive to point out the hills over which they were chased like sheep by the Singh and men still show where their fathers fought and fell." His establishment of a Punjab military post at Jamrud is an unparalleled feat in the military history of the world. He abolished the forced labour in Kashmir, restored the use of shoes, caps and turbans to the Kashmiri Pandits, Tora tax on Hindu marriages, births and deaths was done away with. His coin 'Hari Singhee' was in use in Kashmir till 1890. He gave charities like Raja Nal, hence his name Nalwa.

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25 *'Letters from India Describing a journey in tire British dominions of India, Tibet, Lahore and Cashmere'* by Victor Vinceleas Jaccquemont a French Botanist Known to the Punjab peasants as Jackman Sahib Bahadur and to their kind as 'Aflatoone-Zaman'. A very learned man he grew a beard and kept a *kirpan*, at Delhi he wore a Churidar and sported a skull cap. He liked Amritsar, 'the Rome of the Sikhs' and immensely liked Ranjit Singh whom he called the bravest prince of the East. His diary contains a very interesting dialogue about Sind. It is dated March, 1831.

Sarkar: What conquests can I undertake at present?

Jacquemont: Any country of Asia not already occupied by the English.

Sarkar: But what province shall I first think of taking? Tibet, you have been there?

Jacquemont: Your Majesty would have only to send your Gurkha Regiment, by that country is miserably poor.

Sarkar: What is the use of conquring such a country. I want lands which are rich and prosperous. Could not have Sind?

The dialogue revealed the mind of the Maharaja and provides answer to the oft-asked question as why Ranjit Singh did not given permission to General Zorawar Singh to conquer Tibet. But Maharaja was not properly informed of the wealth of Tibet. Therefore, it was only after Maharaja's death that Zorawar conquered for the Lahore Durbar under Maharaja Sher Singh territories such as Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet. He died of frost-bite at 16,000 feet above the sea level at Taklakot near Kailash Mansarover, defeating the Chinese mercenaries. Zorawar's body cut to the pieces, bit by bit, bone by bone. His hair were pulled out and distributed among the fighting families of the Tibetans. The belief was that the relic of such a brave general would bring good luck and prosperity to its possessor. Zorawar was just 48 at the time of his martyrdom. The account is corroborated by Col Basti Ram and Captain Cunningham's diaries in British India. On September 16, 1842 a treaty was concluded between Maharaja Sher Singh, Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, the Emperor of China and Lama Guru of Lhasa where in it was agreed that the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings as fixed from the ancient times would be respected. History tells us that the treaty stands till today.

26 *The Real Ranjit Singh* (1965) by Fakir Syed Waheeduddin, the great grandson of Fakir Azizuddin, the Foreign Minister of the Maharaja, published from Lahore, Pakistan. An outstanding work based on original sources and family records, it is .indispensable for any deep study the life and times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

27 *Life and Times of Ranjit Singh- A Saga of Benevolent Despotism,* by Dr Bikram Jit Singh Hasrat (1977): This book must be read to contest the point that Ranjit Singh was benevolent but not a despot. Benevolent despotism is a British phrase coined to describe the Tudor Kings of England. There is no comparison between the two because the outlook of the Tudor despots was diametrically different from that of the Sikh ruler. The former were feudal in outlook, the latter was modern. Tudor kings came to rule as a result of dynastic struggle while Ranjit Singh was a part of a movement which stood for liberty, equality and fraternity, the three ideals of French Revolution.

28 *Sikh Clergy and Ranjit Singh* by Purushottam K. Nijhawan - a paper present at the India International Centre during a seminar on Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Bhai Vir Singh Foundation in the winter of 2001. Based on original sources such as *Jang Namah* of Shah Mohammad, Janam Sakhi Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, Dr Giani Bhajan Singh's *Amar Kahani Maharaja Ranjit Singh* published by the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (1983) and the three Jullundur dailies namely *Jagbani* (Punjabi), *Punjab Kesari* (Hindi) and *Hind Samachar* (Urdu) and many more documents, it is a very valuable research paper throwing rare light on the role of clergy in the evolution and development of the Punjabi state by Ranjit Singh. Nijhawan has explained why the siege of Lahore was lifted without firing a single shot. Although Ranjit Singh was the de-facto occupant of Lahore, this clergy which

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put a stamp on his rulership (not Maharajgi) on the following five conditions:

a) Ranjit Singh's rule in Lahore would not be personal or despotic. Instead it would be *Sarkar-i-Khalsa* of which he would act as the chief;

b) He will not issue coins in his own name. Instead he will issue only Nanakshahi coins which were earlier issued by Banda Bahadur;

c) He will not, like other sovereign kings, ascend the throne, but consider himself as the chief servant of the people because the sovereignty now vests with the commonwealth of the Khalsa;

d) He will not humiliate those, whose he would annex to his kingdom. On the contrary he will bestow on the vanquish the suitable station in life, treat them with due respect in the Lahore Court; and

e) He would in no case take into his harem the wife or wives of the defeated chieftans.

Ranjit Singh accepted the above Panchsheel in all humility and strove to abide by it. It was at that point that the Akal Takht decided to anoint him as the ruler of Lahore. Accordingly Baba Sahib Singh Bedi who had largely conducted all these parleys with the Sikh Clergy on behalf of the young conqueror was authorised to anoint him on behalf of the Khalsa Panth with a 'Tilak' ceremony of Ranjit Singh, Maharajgi . The actual ceremony took place on the Baisakhi day on April 12, 1801. Ranjit Singh acted on all the conditions except the fifth when he fell madly in love with the widow of the Gujrat chief who died in the battlefield. Ranjit Singh accepted the punishment by Akal Takht but was condoned on an appeal by the Sikh grandees who appealed on grounds of human weakness. Nijhawan concluded saying that Sikhism in the hands of the Sikh clergy during Ranjit Singh's times was the real religion of God Himself which means Din-i-Ilahi that was acting as a bridge between the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab. But where Akbar failed, Ranjit Singh with the help of the Sikh clergy eminently succeeded. An outstanding paper it deserves to be expanded into a book.

29 *Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times* (1990) by Bhagat Singh - Based on original sources it is a mine of information, in particular, the social and economic conditions in Punjab during Maharaja's rule.

30 Prof. R.R. Sethi, The *Mighty and Shrewd Maharaja* (1960). This account is not only interesting but also a critical analysis of the might and shrewdness of Ranjit Singh.

31 *Maharaja Ranjit Singh - The French Connection* (2001) by Jean Marie Lefont edited by Prof. Prithipal Singh, a valuable source on Ranjit Singh's relations with the French. Relied on French sources a very different picture of the Maharaja emerges.

32 *Queen Victoria's Maharaja Duleep Singh* (1981) by Michael Alexander and Susheela Anand, Vikas, New Delhi. An excellent biography of an exile it throws a flood of light on the last days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who died when Duleep Singh was less than a year old. The authors have relied on British accounts which are gossipy, slanderous and unhistorical. It is a story of the 10-year old boy when he was dispossessed of his vast kingdom and fifty five when he died in a Paris hotel History is cruel to losers but it must be said to the credit of Duleep Singh that he even tried to invade India with Russian help. He hobnobbed with the native princes and the King of Nepal but the empire of his father could not be redeemed. When his mother Maharani Jind Kaur died he was refused permission to immerse her' ashes' into the Ganga which was Maharani' last desire.

33 *Travels in Cashmere and Punjab* by Baron Charles Hugel (1845). An Austrian traveller his account is fascinating. Ranjit Singh treated him as a state guest. He travelled in the Punjab hills and left an imperishable account of Jawalamukhi temple of Kangra, the Gurkha shrine at Gugarnath, the Gosains, the Sadhus, the Sanyasis, Bairagis, Hugel knew Persian and learnt Punjabi. *The most important contribution of Ranjit Singh,*according to Hugel is 'to raise all the people of Punjab to the same social level'.

34 *The Punjab's Pioneer Freeaom Fighters* (1963) by Dr M. L. Ahluwalia and Dr Kirpal Singh with an introduction by Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, the then Chief Minister of Punjab. According to

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Ahluwalia Ranjit Singh not only sealed the borders at Khyber Pass but also halted the expansion of the British beyond Sutlej. Ranjit Singh always asserted his sovereign status much to the irksomeness of the British Agents. Ahluwalia's book is not only a source of rare information but also inspiration. Ahluwalia concludes that 'we lost Punjab to the British for the same reasons that Tippu Sultan lost his 'Sultanate-i-Khudadad', the Marhattas their empire and the Mughals their nominal sovereignty'.

35 *Maharaja Ranjit Singh* by K. K. Khullar (1980) published by Hem Publishlers, New Delhi (C-123, Greater Kailash, New Delhi 110048).

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17

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DURING RANJIT SINGH'S TIME

The Maharaja's strong government created peace and stability. People irrespective of caste, creed and race, etc., lived harmoniously. Interpersonal and inter-religious or inter-ritual bitterness considerably lessened. People felt encouraged to improve their standard of living at micro and macro levels, thereby leading to more production, more consumption and increase in trading activities.

The Maharaja, being highly perceptive, took keen interest in stepping up this trend. He harnessed both state and private enterprises to establish industries and to give a fillip to internal and foreign trade. The most important industries which state enterprise established were defence industry, boat-making, salt mining. Private enterprise got involved in industries such as cotton silk production, shawl-making, etc.

Since all these activities were inter-related and required all the factors of production to get concentrated at one place, the result was the emergence of special conglomerates of cities or expansion of the already existing cities. Expressed in modern parleys, urbanization took place on a large scale. The old cities, expanded and new cities enlarged in the whole expanse of the kingdom of Ranjit Singh. The distinguishing feature of this development was that in most of the urbanized cities, some sort of planning was followed, medieval concept of habitations, recognizing caste, religion or tribe in the scheme of settlement were not rigidly followed and new concepts of urban planning laying emphasis on keeping environment free from pollution and enabling people to mix freely irrespective of their affiliation to caste, creed, etc., were preferred. The following is a profile of urban centres which bear testimony to the Maharaja's creative sensibility as also the prosperity of his kingdom.

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Urban Development during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Time

A Planned Town – Wazirabad

Wazirabad (21 miles north-west of Gujranwala) situated on the bank of the river Chenab was founded by Wazir Khan[1] (Hakim IIm-ud-din), one of the *amirs* of Shah Jahan, the Mughal Emperor, in about 1635-36 A.D. (1045 A.H). A few villages were detached from Sodhra and Sialkot to form a new *pargana*. Being situated on the route and the ferry of river Chenab, it became an important town during the reign of Mohammad Shah in the first half of 18th century.[2] The population of the town dwindled in the beginning of the Sikh rule and it was repopulated by Gubakash Singh and his son Jodh Singh from whom it was conquered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1810. In December 1829, Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Avitabile as Governor of Wazirabad who remained there uptil 1836.[3] During this period, he remodeled the old town as has been stated by Lincoln:

"As laid out by him (Avitabile), Wazirabad was parellelogram in shape enclosed by an irregular brick wall. Within is a broad and straight bazaar running from end to end and crossed at right angles by minor streets, also straight and of good width, the whole being marked by an almost entire absence of the tortuous culs de sac so general in the town of purely native design."[4]

Wolff, who visited Wazirabad in 1831 and met Avitabile, writes, "He was governor of Wazirabad which he has remarkably improved. He (Avitabile) had kept the street of the city clean."[5] Lieut. William Barr has described this town in following words (1830): "We passed beneath a lately constructed and lofty gateway…The streets we traversed were broad, clean and possessed of some good houses."[6]

Ganesh Dass, a contemporary writer, has given vivid description of various gardens which were laid there: "In the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh many eminent persons laid out orchards and gardens outside the city. The garden of Kirpa Ram Chopra adjoining the city is well-known. The garden of Diwan Thakur Das Chopra, who served Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu, is also beautiful. Similarly, the gardens of Kishan Kaur Bania, Lorindi Shah Arora son of Bhana Shah, Khushal Singh Jamadar and Uttam Singh Chhachi are in a flourishing state. The *sarai* of Waazirabad, in which the Maharaja used to stay is a beautiful place. It has a pleasing garden and a high tower."[7]

Col. Steinbach writes, "In point of architecture, Wazirabad may take precedence of any other town in the Punjab. This is owing to the exertions of General Avitabile, an European, lately in service of the Sikh government who spent much of his accumulated wealth in decorating and improving the locality of his residence. The streets are broad and bazaars exceedingly commodious."[8]

The remodeled city was so much liked by the British that it was made the headquarters of district which included the present districts of Sialkot, Gujranwala

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together with parts of Gurdaspur and Lahore districts. In 1852, however, it lapsed to its present position and became a sub-district headquarter of district Gujranwala.[9] According to Census of 1881, its population was 1,646.[10]

Wazirabad had been a centre for boat manufacturing.[11] Its hosiery used to find a market all over upper India but it suffered keen competition of the imported article. Chenille was once made here. Mr. Lockwood Kipling, the late principal of Mayo School of Art, wrote, "At Wazirabad a triviality of English introduction has found a place in the manufacture of chenille. Many years ago it was fashionable to make silk into strings reserve being elongated caterpillars, and it is still used as a trimming. The original massive form is preserved at Wazirabad."[12]

Wazirabad was one of the important trade centres on the river Chenab. The Chenab was navigable from its confluences with Jehlum to Akhnur in Jammu territory about 50 miles above Wazirabad. A considerable trade was carried on both up and down the stream. Timber from the Jammu Hills, sugar, ghee, wheat, coarse cotton cloth, hides and dry skins of sheep and goats were sent downstream to Multan from where they were taken to Kabul via Dera Ghazi Khan.[13]

Wazirabad was thus one of the important cities of the Lahore kingdom under Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

A Flourishing Town of Gujranwala

Another important town which owes its flourishing position to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his family is Gujranwala. Situated on the Grand Trunk Raod and forty two miles north west of Lahore, the ancient capital of the Punjab, has been mentioned by different names. Henry T. Prinsep calls it Gujarauli and Baron Charles Hugel Gursersoli.[14]

Gujranwala came up as a town with the rise of Sikh power. We do not find any mention of it in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Rather it was under the *Pargana* headquarters of Eminabad. Jehangir has mentioned its adjoining village Karjakh[15] but not Gujranwala. Gujranwala appears to have been founded by Charhat Singh,[16] grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Mahan Singh, Charhat Singh's son did a lot to make this town popular. He persuaded the inhabitants of nearby village Syednagar to shift to this place where they were allowed to build their homes.[17] A portion of the town is still named after their village. After Mahan Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh remained in Gurjranwala uptil 1799 AD. Afterwards, it was given in *jagir* to Hari Singh Nalwa.

Hari Singh Nalwa greatly contributed to the prosperity of this town. He used to receive the foreign visitors here. Hugel has recorded the account of his meeting with Hari Singh Nalwa in 1836. About Baradari of Hari Singh it has been stated that it was "a good specimen of Sikh architecture."[18] Lieut. William Barr writes, "This is one of the prettiest Eastern Homes I have ever seen. It consists of three storeys, each

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containing a room about sixteen feet square, lower ones enclosed by Varandha. A range of fountains extends close to the extreme front."[19] Baron Charles Hugel has greatly admired the garden and has given its lengthy description.[20] David Ross writes about the garden in 1883: "It abounds in fine fruit trees especially orange trees imported from Malta by General Avitabile of the Sikh service."[21]

The villages surrounding the present town of Gujranwala were in ruins during the Mughal period. "Before the close of the Muhammadan period a mysterious depopulation took place, the reasons for which have never been properly made out. Some consider it was owing to the great famine and devastating wars by which the Punjab was convulsed during the last years of Muhammadan supremacy."[22] Ranjit Singh took lot of pains to rehabilitate the deserted villages which ultimately contributed to the prosperity of Gujranwala. According to Gujranwala District Gazetteer, "There were intimate connections of many of the leading Sikh families with the Maharaja such as Hari Singh Nalwa of Gujranwala, Misar Dewan Chand of Gondlawala (a village near Gujranwala), all best governors such as Dewan Sawan Mal of Akalgarh, Dewan Dhanpat Rai of Sodhra and successful courtiers such as Jawahar Singh of Ramnagar, Jai Singh Man and Sardar Sham Singh of Butala – from this district."[23]

Expansion of Amritsar and its Trade and Industry

Before Ranjit Singh, Amritsar was divided amongst nearly a dozen families owning different parts of the town. These families had built fortresses in their localities and maintained a retinue of armed tax collectors who mulcted the traders and shopkeepers.[24] Maharaja Ranjit Singh brought the entire populace under his administration.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh raised the status of Amritsar by making it the summer capital of his kingdom. He used to stay here for about four months in a year. He often received here important British dignitaries.[25] Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule represented a change wherein old nobility (*misaldars*) had been absorbed and new nobility had been created. In the 18th century, the old nobility had carved out their localities in the sacred city. The new nobility, viz., courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were equally keen to own different areas in Amritsar where the Maharaja used to stay for a number of months. Encouraged by the Maharaja, a number of localities developed. These localities were named after the name of their founders who were the prominent persons of those times. The important localities were:

City of Gardens

Maharaja Ranjit Singh made Amritsar a city of gardens. Ganesh Dass Wadehra, mentions the existence of following gardens inside the city-Bagh-Guru-Bagh-Akalian; garden of Attar Singh Kalianwala and Misar Rulia Ram. Around Ram Bagh, which was laid for the comfort of the Maharaja, there were laid numerous new gardens

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belonging to various courtiers like Misar Beli Ram, Prince Kharak Singh, Tara Singh, Jawala Singh Pathania, Desa Singh Majitha, Gurmukh Singh Giani, Jamadar Khushal Singh and others.[26] The modern Rani Bagh belonged to Tej Singh who got the title of Raja after First Anglo-Sikh War in 1846. Besides these, there are mentioned numerous gardens which existed in Amritsar in the times of Ranjit Singh. Samdula Kashmiri Muslim, was very well known person of Amritsar. He was famous for his generosity. He had his garden outside Sultanwind Gate.[27] Near Ram Bagh, there used to be a garden of Gul Bahar Begam, the Muslim wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.[28] But the most important garden in Amritsar which formed a part of summer palace was named Ram Bagh. It was laid by the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the pattern of Shalamar Garden, Lahore. At its old site, there used to be a mud fort belonging to the Bhangi Chiefs. The grounds were encircled by solid masonary walls, some fourteen feet high, and rampart carrying guns. This was constructed by the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819 AD. Outside the wall was a moat filled with water. Within this structure a beautiful garden was laid by Kirpa Ram, son of Dewan Moti Ram. In the middle of the garden a luxurious two-storeyed palace was built. These were constructed with cool underground apartments for use in the hot weather. Nearby was a swimming pool for the ladies of the royal household. Small palaces were provided for the chiefs. Both garden and buildings were constructed under the supervision of Faqir Aziz-ud-din, Sardar Desa Singh and Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia. The red stone work of all these buildings was executed by workmen brought from Delhi by Faqir-Aziz-ud-din.[29]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh appears to have taken personal interest in the development of this city. V. Jacquemont, who visited Amritsar on the 8th March, 1831, observed that Amritsar is the largest city in the Punjab. Its area can be deduced to about 10,000 sq metres. It put the population between than in any other town in British India and it is the first city which have seen with obvious signs of expansion. The bazaars are very numerous in general and the houses of merchants have homes three or four storeys high, the front being whitened and covered with coarse mythological pictures.[30]

Another contemporary writer Ganesh Dass Wadehra writes:

ਇਮਰੋਜ਼ ਮਿਸਲੇ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਦਰ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਕਲਾਂ ਦੀਗਰ ਨੀਸਤ।
ਸੋਦਾਗਰਾਂ ਅਜ਼ ਹਰ ਵਲਾਯਤ ਆਮਦਾ ਆਂ ਜਾ ਆਬਾਦ ਸ਼ੁਦੰਦ।
ਅਕਸਰ ਕੌਮੇ ਖਤਰੀਆਨ ਲਾਹੌਰੀ ਦਰ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਸਕੂਨਤ ਵਾ
ਵਤਨ ਇਖਤਿਆਰ ਕਰਦੰਦ।[31]

(Today no other city in the whole of the Punjab is as large as Amritsar. Merchants from all countries have come to Amritsar and settled here. Many Khatris of Lahore have adopted Amritsar as their home.) At another place, he writes that the *Sahukars* of Amritsar are extremely rich. In the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Rama Shah Bania was the most distinguished among them.[32]

Regarding textile manufacture in Amritsar, Jacquemont wrote, "At Amritsar

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a large quantity of woolen stuff is manufactured, a kind of coarse cloth. This is dyed bright, scarlet and exported to other parts of India. It is used by the middle classes as winter clothing. The Kashmiris manufacture it from common wool, a sort of serge, very thick and warm. Many of Sikh horsemen have cloaks of this material which they use in winter or during the rains. But the greater part of the Kashmiris is occupied in cleaning the shawls brought from Kashmir and destined for the Indian market."[33]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh transformed the town of Amritsar into the biggest commercial city. Baron Hugel wrote, "Amritsar is now the richest city in the northern India. ...it is larger city than Lahore. The wealth of the whole Punjab seem collected in it and the great merchants have made it the abode... I felt agitated with various emotions as my elephant passed the city gates where Thanedar was waiting with numerous deputations of merchants to receive me. Amritsar is most bustling of all cities in the Punjab, in every street the most beautiful production of India are seen exhibited for sale."[34]

With regard to handicrafts of Amritsar, Steinbach wrote, "Shawls are made in considerable numbers at Amritsar."[35] Similarly, Walter Hamilton regarded Amritsar as a "Grand Emporium" for shawl and saffron of Kashmir and for various other commodities from the Deccan and eastern part of India.[36]

There were certain historical and geographical factors which led Amritsar to develop rapidly in the commercial and industrial fields during the first half of 19th century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh by conquering Kangra and Kashmir wool and shawl needed market which was provided by this sacred city that was frequently visited by the Maharaja and the courtiers. Moreover, Diwali, Dussehera and Baisakhi festivals attracted large gatherings from commercial activities of the trading classes. The various products of Kangra and Mandi Hills were gathered there and exchanged for the produce of the plains.

About 1833 AD, there occurred a famine in Kashmir. Consequently, a number of Kashmiri skilled labourers migrated to Amritsar. The Kashmiris brought with them instruments and technique to develop shawl industry and manufacture of thick warm blankets which the horsemen of the Sikh army used in winter. The shawls, carpets, silk and cotton fabrics were exported from Amritsar to other parts of India. There was a great demand of shawls in Hyderabad, Lucknow and states of Rajputana. The shawls of Kashmir were exported from Amritsar.[37]

MULTAN

According to Steinbach, Multan was the third town in order of importance in the kingdom of Ranjit Singh. He writes, "Its modern consequence arises from the great extent of commerce of which it is the seat, the banking transactions particularly

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giving it a prominence over all other towns in Western India."[38] Again he asserts, "At the risk of repetition, it may be stated that the principal marts of commerce of the country are Mooltan, Amritsar, Leia and Lahore."[39]

On acccout of Nadir's invasion and decline of the Mughal Empire, Multan suffered a lot. One Zehad Khan was appointed as Nawab of Multan by Mohammad Shah, the Mughal Emperor. The Nawabs who succeeded him were continually engaged in internal conflicts with their relations. In the times of Ranjit Singh, Sawan Mal ruled the province from 1821 to 1844. He improved the condition of Multan by making a canal of 300 miles in this province[41] which ultimately contributed to the prosperity of the city of Multan.

Alexander Burnes who visited Multan on June 15, 1831 writes, "The city of Multan is upwards of three miles in circumference, surrounded by a dilapidated wall and overlooked on north by fortress of strength. It contains a population of about 60,000 souls, one third of whom may be Hindus. The rest of the population is Muhamadan, for though it is subject to the Seikhs, their number is confined to the garrison which does not exceed 500 men. Many of the houses evidently stand on the ruins of others, they are built of brick and have flat roofs. They sometimes rise to the height of six storeys. The inhabitants are chiefly weavers and dyers of cloth." "The silk manufacture of Multan is *Kais* (piece of silk) and may be had of all colours and from the value of 20 to 100 rupees per piece. It is less delicate in texture than the "loongee" of Bhawalpoor."[42]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh took special interest in encouraging the silk trade in Multan as has been testified by Alexander Burnes who writes, "Ranjit Singh has with much propriety encouraged this manufacture since he captured the city and giving no other cloth at his court has greatly increased their consumption, they are worn as Seshes and scarfs by all Sheikh Sardars. They are exported to Khorasan and India and duties levied are moderate." With regard to the trade route to India he wrote, the route by Jaysulmeer (Jaisalmer) and Beecaneer (Bikaner) is chosen in preference to that of Sind, from the trade being on more equitable footing. The trade of Multan is much the same as at Bhawalpoor. But it is on a large scale for it has forty shroffs (money changers) chiefly natives of Shikarpoor."[43]

Vigne writes about the silk manufacture, "Multan is famous for its silk manufacture. I visited house of a weaver, it presented a very different appearance from a shawl maker in Kashmir. Seven hundred mounds of raw silk are brought to Multan every year by the Lohanis chiefly from Bokhara and Turkistan: these are manufactured in one hundred and fifty workshops. One man will finish an ordinary *Kais* in six days, perhaps three yards long and a foot and half wide. The red colour is most valuable, it is dyed with cochineal which is brought from either Bombay or

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Bokhara. Multan is also famous for its carpets and embroidery."[44]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave impetus to urban development by encouraging trade and industry. Many small towns were converted into cities, bringing more people into the orbit of urbanization. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took personal interest in encouragement of silk textile of Multan and ordered that all courtiers should use *Sashes* of Amritsar.[45] Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule Wazirabad was an insignificant town and just before annexation by the British it had risen to be one of the most important cities of the land of five rivers and the British made it the centre of their administration in their region.[46] Phillaur on the bank of Sutlej was an insignificant place. The *sarai* built by Shah Jehan had decayed. The Maharaja occupied it in 1807 and recognized its importance as frontier town commanding most frequented ferry of river Sutlej. The Maharaja built there a fort which attracted population and later on it developed into an important border town of the Lahore kingdom.[47] Similar the case with Attock, on the bank of river Indus where the Maharaja encouraged the manufacture of boats.[48] Similarly, the city of Peshawar was patronized by ordering the manufacture of guns for the state force there. According to William Barr, the guns casted in Lahore kingdom were not inferior to the guns of the East India Company.[49] Maharaja Ranjit Singh tried his best to revive paper industry of Sialkot. Mr. Prinsep gives the number of mills at work at the time of his settlement as 82 employing nearly 1000 men.[50] Ganesh Dass testifies the revival of prosperity of the city under Maharaja Ranjit Singh as he writes, "New gardens were laid out"[51] (gives the details about the gardens and various *Khanqas* and *Mazars* of holy men of Islam). In Lahore, Shalimar Garden was in ruins. The Maharaja renovated the old monuments. He also established a *Karkhana* for casting of guns near Shaha di Garhi. This was shown to Captain Murray by the Maharaja and subsequently Murray wrote to Wade that the guns casted there were not only supplied to the Sikh forces but were exported to other countries also.[52] Thus almost all the cities in the Lahore kingdom were greatly developed in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

– Dr. Kirpal Singh

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AMRITSAR DURING MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S TIME

Before the occupation of Amritsar by Ranjit Singh, the town was divided nearly among a dozen families owning different parts of the city. These families had built fortresses in their localities and maintained retinues of armed tax collectors who mulcted the traders and shopkeepers.[1] Maharaja Ranjit Singh brought the entire city under his administration. Collection of taxes at various places in the city was abolished and Missar Chhajju Mal was appointed Collector of Customs for the entire city. He was succeeded by Rullia Ram as Chief of the Customs Department. His *haveli* is just opposite Gurdwara Tahli Sahib (Santokhsar) where his descendants live up to this day.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh raised the status of Amritsar by making it the summer capital of his kingdom. He used to stay here for about four months in a year. Here, he often received important dignitaries who came to visit him. It was in Amritsar that he met Jaswant Rao Holkar in 1805.

GOBINDGARH FORT

The foremost task which was undertaken by Ranjit Singh after establishing himself in Amritsar was construction of the Gobindgarh fort. At the old site of this fort there used to be an old fort which had been constructed by Gujar Singh, son of Gurbaksh Singh, one of the founders of the Bhangi Misl. This was repaired and rebuilt by Ranjit Singh with brick and lime with numerous bastions and strong iron gates. Twenty five pieces of cannon were placed in the fort.[3] In it, treasure was deposited and a guard of 2,000 soldiers was appointed under the charge of Imam-ud-din, a brother of the famous Faqir Aziz-ud-din.[4]

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According to Baron Hugel, the construction had been started in 1807 on the pattern of Ramgarh, the famous fort of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia.[5] Hugel writes, "In 1809 he (Maharaja) ordered it to be put into the best state of defence, and continued improvements have made it now a very strong post rising to a lofty height above the plain, it presents with its tiers of guns, one over the other, a remarkably imposing aspect. The Indians say that the Maharaja's treasure is kept there."[6] Mufti Ali-ud-Din, the author of *Ibrat Namah*, has given a detailed account of this fort. It had eight towers (*burj*). Around it there used to be ditches made of bricks. There were two big gates – eastern gate and western gate. The eastern gate was the main entrance and it had a huge wooden door on which carving had been made. The dome of its entrance was gilded.[7]

The distinguished visitors were received in the Gobindgarh fort. Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in India, was received there when he went to attend the marriage of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in 1837 A.D.[8] On September 11, 1837, *Vakils* of the Nepal Government saw the fort and were impressed by its ramparts, towers, strength of its walls, the ditch etc. and remarked that they had never seen such a fort in the countries protected by the rajas.[9] On December 12, 1838, the Governor General Lord Auckland visited the Gobindgarh fort. His visit has been vividly described by Munshi Sohan Lal, the official diarist of Ranjit Singh:

> "As the sun rose the sowars brought the news about Lat Sahib (Governor General). The Sarkar immediately proceeded to receive him, riding on elephant and accompanied by select troops well decorated and armed. The Sarkar joined the Governor General near the Katra Khazana Gate. Then they proceeded toward fort Gobindgarh and a salute was fired a second time. The Sarkar showed the fort and ditch. The Governor General felt very much pleased on seeing it and remarked that 'it had been constructed quite strong and safe.'"[10]

Fortification of Amritsar

Ranjit Singh started fortification of Amritsar in 1821 A.D. "The fortification consisted of an immense rampart of earth at least 25 feet thick and a wide ditch. Beyond the ditch and in front of the twelve gateways built wholly of masonry (of which only the Ram Bagh gate has remained intact at present) large circular revelins were constructed and similar works were projected from intermediary points of rampart."[11]

Ranjit Singh assigned this huge construction to one of his officers named Ganesh Dass who started the work from the side of the present Mahan Singh Gate. Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala sent one thousand masons from his territory for

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help in this work. Desa Singh Majithia and other notable *jagirdars* furnished men and materials for this huge construction. Between every two gates there were constructed twenty towers and the total number of towers was two hundred and forty.[12]

Following were the twelve gates in the fortification as enumerated by the author of *Ibrat Namah*[13]:

1. Lahori Gate
2. Khazana Gate (Khazana was a well-known Kashmiri)
3. Deodi Hakim
4. Gillwali Gate
5. Deodi Rangar Nangalian
6. Ramgarhia Gate
7. Ahluwalia Gate
8. Gate Doburji
9. Gate Kalan Deodi
10. Ram Bagh Gate
11. Deodi Shahzada
12. Lohgarh Gate

For more than twenty years the construction work of the fortification of Amritsar continued. About seven *lacs* of *rupees* were spent by Maharaja Sher Singh (1841-43). According to Captain C. M. Wade (1794-1861), who had fairly long experience in the East India Company's military service, the design of Amritsar's fortification was unlike the "native forts." It showed substantial European influence that had come with the employment of French officers in Ranjit Singh's service.[14] It appears that it was the intention of the Maharaja to make Amritsar an impregnable city. On 29th May, 1827, Wade was received at Amritsar and reviewed the Legion commanded by the Maharaja's French officers Allard and Ventura. He also observed minutely the fortification of Amritsar. He found Amritsar a besieged city – an army of 25,000 men including the Maharaja's corps of artillery and infantry encamped around its walls. He reported: "It was a scene of activity more like preparation of war than a military spectacle."[15] Perhaps due to these impressions the fortification of Amritsar was demolished just after the first Anglo-Sikh War in 1846 three years after its completion. In its place, the present wall was constructed by the British Government.

Expansion of the Town

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule represented a change wherein the old nobility (*misldars*) had been absorbed and a new nobility had been created. In the 18th century, the old nobility had carved out their localities in the sacred city. The new nobility, viz., the courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were equally keen to own different areas

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in Amritsar where the Maharaja used to stay for a number of months. In this way, a number of new localities developed. These localities were named after their founders, who were prominent persons of those times. The localities were:

1. *Katra Bhai Sant Singh Giani:* Bhai Sant Singh had been put in charge of repairs and beautification of Darbar Sahib by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
2. *Dhab Bhai Vasti Ram:* Bhai Vasti Ram was a holy man whose *smadh* was outside the Lahore fort. His grandsons Bhai Ram Singh and Bhai Gobind Ram were highly respected courtiers of the Maharaja.
3. *Katra Moti Ram:* Moti Ram was son of Mohkam Chand, a General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
4. *Katra Kanwar Kharak Singh:* Kharak Sirgh was the son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This *Katra* was also known as Katra Nakkai, because the mother of Kharak Singh, Raj Kaur, belonged to Nakkai *Misl.*
5. *Katra Hakima:* This was founded by Faqir Aziz-ud-din, the Foreign Minister of Ranjit Singh. Incidentally, Aziz-ud-din was also a *hakim*, (physician).
6. *Katra Nihal Singh Attariwala:* Nihal Singh Attariwala was father of Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala. The latter valiantly fell fighting in the battle of Subroan in 1846. Sham Singh's daughter had been married to Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
7. *Katra Karam Singh:* Karam Singh belonged to village Rangar Nangal (District Amritsar). He was an important courtier of Ranjit Singh. Out of the twelve gates of fortification, one was named Deodi Rangar Nangalian. Since Arjan Singh fought against the British in the second Sikh War, the family was severely punished by the British.
8. *Katra Mit Singh Padhania:* Mit Singh was an important General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (for details see *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Panjab*, Lahore, 1940, Vol. I, pp. 378-80).
9. *Katra Kanwar Sher Singh*: Kanwar Sher Singh was son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Mehtab Kaur, daughter of Sada Kaur, leader of the Kanahyia*Misl.*
10. *Katra Fateh Singh Kaliallwala*: Fateh Singh of village Kala (near Khalsa College, Amritsar) was a General of the Maharaja.

According to Giani Gian Singh, land in every *Katra* was granted free. However, nominal rent was charged annually. It was collected by the *Misaldar* concerned. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Amritsar, this rent began to be deposited in the state treasury by the various inhabitants who had built their houses in various *Katras.* This practice continued during the British period.[16]

During the time of Ranjit Singh, there were two memorable ladies of Amritsar whose names have been associated with various areas. One was Mai Sewan, wife of Fateh Singh Kalianwala. After the death of her husband, she donated her entire *Katra* to the Golden Temple. In this way, she wanted to perpetuate her memory as she was issueless. Modern Mai Sewan Bazar is called so after her name. The second memorable lady was Mai Karmo. She was a *Kardar* of Rani Sada Kaur,[17] mother-in-law of Ranjit

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Singh. She was famous for generosity and gave liberal donations and charities, whosoever came to her threshold. Hence, her threshold Deodi became famous forming name of the parts of the locality, Karmo Deodi.

Adornment of Darbar Sahib

Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, had been the focal point of the Sikh faith. Amongst the Sikhs, it was regarded as an act of virtue to contribute something to the adornment of their sacred shrine. According to David Ross, "The victories of Ranjit Singh, enabled him to do much towards beautifying the temple and the city."

As it has been stated in one inscription in Gurmukhi on one of the doors of Darbar Sahib, Maharaja Ranjit Singh entrusted the work of decoration of the temple to Bhai Sant Singh Giani. Bhai Sant Singh belonged to Chiniot (modern District Jhang now in Pakistan) and "stood in high favour of the Maharaja."[18] Because of his learning in Sikh theology, he was called *Giani* and was held in high esteem. After getting this assignment he invited the Muslim artists of Chiniot who were famous in the art of decoration. But they were adept only in the art of decorating the walls with glazed colours.[19] They could not do fresco-painting.

Early 19th century was the period when the Kangra School of Art was on the decline. The Kangra and the surrounding hill states had been conquered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The artists were attracted towards the plains as lavish patronage for art was extended by the Maharaja. Thus, another school of art came into being, which is known as Sikh School of Art. S.G. Thakur Singh writes, "The arts of the Punjab soared high in the people's approach to life under the patronising affection of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Sikh School of Art, founded by him, introduced novel values in the realisation of the beautiful. The school contributed rich contours and colours to the religious and administrative monuments of the time and ultimately gave its very best to the Golden Temple, Amritsar which is the palpable, solidified shape of the aesthetic devotion of the artists concerned and a unique gem of their offering to God."[20]

A number of artists were employed at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. An important line of the artists whose work is still extant, belonged to Kehar Singh's family. The original name of Kehar Singh was Sher Singh. He enjoyed the royal patronage of the Maharaja. He had two nephews, namely, Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh. Bishan excelled in both the arts – painting as well as fresco-painting. His paintings are extant above a window on western side of the first storey, of the Golden Temple. These indicate a mingling of Iranian art with Punjabi culture. Above the central window of the eastern side in the same storey, we find his name inscribed as "Bishan Singh Naqqash." He had two sons – Nihal Singh and Jawala Singh, who followed in the footsteps of their father. Their work is also extant inside the Golden Temple.[21]

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There are, in all, more than 300 different patterns of fresco-paintings. These indicate a variety of richness in colourful representation of floral and zoological designs. The botanical and zoological symbols have been dexterously juxtaposed so as to convey an impression of an organised integral whole.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also gold-plated the domes and the outer walls of Darbar Sahib. The entire work appears to have been completed by 1830 AD as it has been indicated in the gold-plated inscription in Gurmukhi characters on the main entrance of the Golden Temple:

> "... the Gracious Guru through his kindness considering Sri Maharaj Singh Sahib Ranjit Singh as his dear disciple and servant got this work done by him, 1887 BK."

In case we study the details of the expenditure incurred on this artistic project, we would come to know that the Maharaja showed great magnanimity in allowing his courtiers and associates to share the virtue of adorning the house of the Guru. According to Giani Gian Singh, two western domes of Darbar Sahib were gold-plated at the expense of Hukam Singh Chimni, (of Gujranwala), an important General of Ranjit Singh. Rest of the domes were gold-plated at the expenses of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. On account of this gold-plating, Darbar Sahib came to be called the Golden Temple.

In 1833, under the supervision of Lehna Singh, marble stone was fixed in the inner *parikarma* of Darbar Sahib.[22] The Golden Temple is 40½ feet square, and rests upon a platform of 67 feet square. It is a two-storeyed marble structure which is like a piece of land rising from the centre of the tank, 520 feet square, the only approach being by a causeway over 200 feet long. ...The lower half is decorated with white marble, inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones – cornelian, serpentine, lapis lazuli. Over the main building rises a low flinted splendid dome in gold metal reflecting the rays of the sun while kiosks with flinted metal cupolas are attached at each corner. ...On the upper floor, there is a small hall of mirrors known as Shish Mahal.[23]

Not only Darbar Sahib, the Central Sikh Shrine, was decorated and repaired in the time of Ranjit Singh but also all the surrounding sacred shrines were either erected or given face-lifting. The four uppermost storeys of Akal Bunga in front of Darbar Sahib were built by the order of Ranjit Singh. The expenses of its outer decoration and of the gold-plating of its dome were donated by Hari Singh Nalwa, the famous General of the Maharaja. The building of Baba Attal Rai was only a three-storeyed structure. The Maharaja raised it to a nine-storeyed building indicating the age of Baba Attal at the time of his death. He also gold-plated its dome. The expenses of the decoration work were met by different courtiers and chiefs whose details have been recorded by Giani Gian Singh.[24]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh and members of his family used to visit Darbar Sahib

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quite often. According to the custom, they used to present something or the other befitting each occasion. In the treasury of the Golden Temple, the following gifts presented by the members of the royal family have been preserved[25]:

1. *Four Pairs of Gold-Plated Doors*: These are meant for the four doors of the Golden Temple. These are fitted on special occasions. On panels of the doors there are paintings on gold-plates.
2. *Gold Umbrella*: It is made from twenty pounds of pure gold. At its top is a peacock of exquisite workmanship. The neck of the peacock is made of saphire, its beak holds a string of pearls, while the rest of the body is bedecked with precious stones.
3. *String of Pearls:* The string of pearls has got 108 pearls. One pearl is bigger than the rest. It is said that once Maharaja Sher Singh reached the Golden Temple earlier than his cashier. He had no cash to offer, so he offered this string of pearls.
4. *Jewel-bedecked Head-Band:* This bridegroom's *sehra* (head-band) had been prepared for the marriage of Prince Nau Nihal Singh, grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja presented it to the Golden Temple. It has thirty-five strings of pearls and its circumference contains 84 pure pearls.
5. *A Canopy:* It is made of rare, rich cloth with embroidery work in gold and silver. It has several frills made of strings of precious pearls of various hues. It was presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the then Nizam of Hyderabad (Deccan). The Maharaja subsequently presented it to the Golden Temple.

Baron Charles Hugel visited the Golden Temple and has given the following account in his *Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*:

> "All Indian temples have something in them which appeals forcibly to the imagination, and the Hari Mander is particularly mysterious and romantic in its character. It is surmounted by a golden roof, very beautifully and skillfully contrived, and is inlaid with marble, a large door of gold opening into the temple, which is surrounded with little vestibules, the ceilings being supported by richly ornamented pillars. Before the entrance to the bridge are two large banners of red; on one is written "*Wahi Guru ji ke Fatih*" in white letters; and on the other, the name "Ram Das". These banners are from thirty to forty ells long, and are stretched on masts and confined with iron chains."

During the times of Ranjit Singh the Golden Temple was surrounded by a number of *Bungas* (*Bunga* is a Persian word meaning residential building). These buildings had been constructed by different *misaldars* (members of old nobility) and chiefs and courtiers of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. These were differently named. Some were called after the names of *misls*, others after the names of localities, and some were after the names of individuals. Giani Gian Singh has enumerated them and given their particulars, viz., name of each *Bunga*, number of its storeys, the year of its construction, and the cost of its construction. There were sixty-nine *Bungas* in all.[26]

Most of these building were used for residential purposes by their owners on the occasions of their visit to the holy place. Some of the Bungas were reserved for the

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holy persons who had devoted themselves to the cause of spreading divine knowledge. According to the Punjab Administration Report 1848-50 Amritsar had been an important Sikh seat of learning. Here in several *Bungas, Gurmukhi* was taught and students were admitted for teaching the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh scripture.[27] Sikh theological knowledge was imparted to the pupils free of charge. The students used to live there and they were provided with free lodging and boarding. In order to meet their expenses the courtiers and the rich people had donated sufficient lands to various *Bungas*. In this way, they served as centres of indigenous education. In some of the Gurmukhi manuscripts, it has been specifically mentioned that it had been written at Akal Bunga, which implies that lot of literary activities were carried on there.[28]

Akharas

In the first half of the 19th century in Amritsar, there flourished a number of *Akharas* (religious establishments). These were founded by the *Udasis* who, according to Teja Singh, worked as preachers or by the *Nirmalas*, another Sikh missionary order.[32] These served as centres of religious thought and learning. These were centres of oriental learning where grammar, medicine, astronomy, etc., were taught. Students were admitted there free and they were also provided with free lodging and boarding. In order to meet their expenses Maharaja Ranjit Singh had sanctioned *jagirs*. The following were the important *Akharas* which were enjoying *jagirs* from the government[29]:

1. Akhara Santokh Dass
2. Akhara Ghumand Dass
3. Akhara Tehl Dass
4. Akhara Chitta Katra
5. Akhara Bala Nund
6. Akhara Prero Dass
7. Akhara Sangalwala
8. Akhara Kanshiwala (Sarn Dass)
9. Akhara Kashiwala
10. Akhara Prag Dass
11. Akhara Babeksar
12. Akhara Samadhianwala.

Festival of Dussehra

Every year, Maharaja Ranjit Singh used to celebrate Dussehra at Amritsar. On this occasion, a military parade was held and the Maharaja used to invite visitors and foreign dignitaries to witness it. In 1835, W. L. M'Gregor was invited to witness this grand military display and he has described it in graphic details:

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"The feast of the Dusserah is celebrated at Amritsar, about the later end of September, or early in October, it being a moveable one. I had an opportunity of witnessing it in 1835. On the day appointed, I was sent for by the Maharaja at about 3 O'clock in the afternoon. I found him seated on the top of which he had created for occasion. In the apartment underneath, I observed the various sirdars, the most conspicuous among them being Rajah Dhyan Singh, the prime minister and his relation, Sirdar Kesree Singh, the former as dressed in chain armour. The approach to where the Maharajah was seated was by means of a ladder, with a trap or lifting-door at the top of it. A chair was placed for me close to Runjeet, the only other person allowed one being the young Rajah Heera Singh. From this elevated position, I had a full view of the troops drawn up on the adjoining plain in the form of an open square, each side consisting of four thousand rank and file, making a total of sixteen thousand men, exclusive of the artillery, which numbered one hundred guns. The whole commenced firing at one and the same time; so that the continued noise of cannon and musketry was quite deafening; and even Runjeet's well practised ear was stunned by the sound: This firing lasted without intermission until the artillery had expended 20,000 cartridges and the infantry an equal proportion. The firing was quick, and intended to represent a battle, the Maharajah assuring me from time to time, that it would be equally expeditious in the scene of action. He asked me what I thought of the firing, and which side of the square fired with the greatest regularity. I was rather both to risk an opinion, but as he insisted on one, I replied, that I thought that one on our left fired with the least interruption, and as chance would have it, the Maharaja had formed the same opinion, remarking, that the soldiers on our left belonged to Sirdar Tej Singh, who had just arrived from Lahore to take part in the Dusserah. Besides the artillery and infantry, there were five hundred camels armed with swivel guns, which likewise took part in the exhibition. The Maharajah being at the time in an infirm state of health, I took my leave of him early, assuring him that I had never witnessed such a sight before."[30]

Trade and Industry

Maharaja Ranjit Singh transformed the town of Amritsar into the biggest commercial city of his state. Baron Hugel wrote, "Amritsir is now the richest city in the northern India. It is a larger city than Lahore. The wealth of the whole Panjab seems collected in it and the great merchants have made it their abode.... I felt agitated with various emotions as my elephant passed the city gates where Thanedar was waiting with a numerous deputation of merchants to receive me. Amritsar is most bustling of all cities of the Panjab, in every street the most beautiful productions of India are seen exhibited for sale."[31] Ganesh Dass Wadehra, another contemporary, has stated: "Today there is no other city in the whole of the Punjab which is as large as Amritsar. The merchants from all countries have come to Amritsar and settled there. Many Khatris of Lahore have adopted Amritsar as their home."[32] With regard to

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handicrafts, Col Steinback wrote, "Shawls are made in considerable numbers at Amritsar."[33] Similarly, Walter Hamilton regarded Amritsar as a "Grand Emporium of trade" for shawl and saffron of Kashmir and for various other commodities from the Deccan and eastern parts of India.[34]

There were certain historical and geographical factors which led Amritsar to develop rapidly in the commercial and industrial fields during the first half of the 19th century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh by conquerring Kangra and Kashmir brought these areas within the proximity of Amritsar. Kashmir wool and shawl needed market which was provided by this sacred city that was frequently visited by the Maharaja and his courtiers. Moreover Diwali, Dussehra and Baisakhi festivals attracted a large gathering from different parts of the Punjab. These festivals gave impetus to the commercial activities of trading classes. The varied products of Kangra and Mandi Hills were gathered there and exchanged for the produce of the plains.

About 1833 A.D. there occurred a famine in Kashmir. Consequently, a number of Kashmiri skilled labourers migrated to Amritsar and there developed a shawl industry. Ever since manufacture of shawl has been one of the biggest industries of Amritsar. The Kashmiris brought with them the necessary instruments and technique to develop shawl industry and manufacture of thick warm blankets which the horsemen of the Sikh army used in winter. Shawls, carpets, silk and cotton fabrics were exported from Amritsar to other parts of India, There was a great demand for shawls in Hyderabad, Lucknow and states of Rajputana. The shawls of Kashmir were also exported from Amritsar.[35] After Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, trade declined due to political insecurity.

– Dr. Kirpal Singh

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RANJIT SINGH AND PUNJABI LITERARY TRADITION

The Sovereign state of Punjab by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1799 did not last more than half a century – too short a period in the history of the people of Punjab, considered against almost a thousand years of their servitude to and over three centuries of relentless struggle against an "alien and continuously alienating rule." Having been emancipated from the subjection alternately to Indian Muslim or Afghan Empires and becoming masters of their own affairs was quite a novel experience for the people of Punjab, who had known during the previous more than a thousand years nothing but dumb servility or sporadic and more often only symbolic defiance – both of which are but expressions of alienation, the one in accepting one's lot whether individual or social as final and sequentially of its possible overthrow.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rise to power, above everything else, signified the birth of a new nation as a culmination of a movement of dissent, protest and rebellion starting with the vision and the teachings of Guru Nanak. For any dissenting and protestant people to assume political supremacy was nothing but a metamorphic change. For the experience to be imbibed and become meaningful, the people had to undergo a new reorientation both in thought and expression. For the eternal rebels to be transformed into kings and masters and assuming responsibility to shape their own destiny, a new climate of faith and feeling was called forth. Even though there is not much celebration of the heroism of the grand saga of the emergence of a people to a distinct nationhood in the art and literature of Punjab, this happy interlude found articulation in numerous other, perhaps more profound ways. In saying this it is not our purpose to deny the significance of Shah Muhammed's *Jang Namah* intoning the tragedy of the fall of the Sovereign State of Punjab which brings in euologising

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references to the heroism and attainments of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But there is no missing the fact that Shah Muhammed's poem is in the nature of lamentation, and not an epic. It does not seek to weave out all the patterns of the life and passions of a people round a central figure of the national hero. In its ambition the *Jang Namah* does not aspire beyond invoking the glory of Ranjit Singh as a setting against which the perfidy and chicanery of his doomed followers is highlighted and the death of Sovereign Punjab is mourned. A still more startling fact worth mentioning here is that there is a long gap of over seventy years between the appearance of the *Jang Namah*, and the time when the theme of Ranjit Singh appeals itself to another Punjabi writer: Kirpa Sagar, as a response to the new stirrings arising from the national resurgence in British India. But that is an altogether different matter. It should make a revealing studying as to why the lead of Shah Muhammed was not followed up. Was it so because of the disintegration of the Punjabi identity due to the none too subtle machinations of the British imperialism? Or did it reflect only the wilting of the national spirit of Punjab as a consequence of the defeat and humiliation the Punjab suffered at the hands of the British? Even when Bhai Vir Singh self moved to grapple with the emotional trauma of the fall of Sikh power, he took resort to the allegorical modes a la *Rana Surat Singh*. Ranjit Singh tended too soon to become a distant memory, all the more romantic and endearing for ever so lengthening distantness. But Punjabi literature showed little inclination to directly relate his person or his heroism to the contemporary aspiration or life-concerns of the Punjabi people.

A slightly more than a casual study, however, of the Punjabi literature of the first half of 19th century reveals a very fascinating scenario of the resurgence of the spirit of the Punjab. The most crucial illustration of this statements is found in Qadar Yar (1802-1892 A.D.), who set out to revive and resurrect, so to say, the myth of Punjab. In his essay on Punjabi literature, a Russian academician I.D. Serebriakov has identified the myth of Raja Rasalu and by that token of Salvahan and Puran, as personification of all the dreams of the people of Punjab for a 'gallant fighter of justice', and a 'just ruler'. It is quite significant, as alluded to above, that the people of Punjab failed to give birth to a national epic of their own, like *Ramayana* or *Mahabharta,* the epics of the midlanders, which could enshrine the national spirit, the cumulative experience of frontier-manship and the collective wisdom of the race. What is still more meaningful, however, is that it was only after the emergence of the Sovereign State of Punjab that the creative impulse to define the Punjabi identity should have arisen and found such a stirring expression.

Before Qadar Yar, Punjabi poets had at their best composed long romances with a greatly circumscribed and restrained creative ambition. These *Qissas* or *Vars* do preserve undying vignettes of Punjabi life and society. In them one comes across

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gripping glimpses into the human situation and the human types highlighted by the Punjabi experience. But an integrated myth of Punjab encompassing the totality of Punjab experience failed to emerge out of over six centuries of the cultivation of the muse. This was so because the Punjabi psyche too diffused to be orchestrated into an abiding harmony. However, Qadar Yar retrieved the myth of Puran Bhagat and Raja Rasalu from the folk tales and legends and retold it afresh for the re-interpretation and personification of the Punjabi soul. No poet before him was inspired to undertake such a comprehensive discovery of the Punjabi personality. His three major compositions: *Var Puran Bhagat*, *Var Rani Kokilan* are interwoven by a common pursuit: to account for the diversity and variety of the Punjabi psyche and to seek the transcending vision of the Punjabi identity which could reharmonise the differences and contracts and paradoxes, such as, between Puran, the *jogi* and Rasalu, the rebel and the king. Dr Mohan Singh does not miss the significance of the fact that this should have been done by Qadar Yar. He finds it strange, "that during the reign of Ranjit Singh, the political hero, a Muslim poet should have taken it in his head to revive the memory of prince, Jogi Puran." Obviously the creative genius or Qadar Yar had been triggered off by the times in which the heroic Punjabi spirit soared very high. The flight and the sweep of the imagination in the Punjabi literature was in direct response to the age of adventure and conquest ushered in by Ranjit Singh.

As I have shown elsewhere there is a great similarity between the Punjabi myth of Puran and Luna and the Greek myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra, both of which deal with the eternal dichotomy between God and man, on the one hand, and nature and culture, on the other. What, however, is most remarkable about the Punjabi myth of Puran and Luna, is its structural construction on: unlike its Greek counterpart it is not complete by itself or totally self-contained. As conceived by Qadar Yar and those who followed him, the myth is a part of a bigger whole and finds its fulfilment in accommodating and assimilating the life-asserting passions within the contrasting life-denying passions by enlarging and transforming the latter. Puran who turns his back upon a hostile and chaotic world of anomic experience by disclaiming all attachment with the stream of life in all its forms – sexual lust of Luna, tender love of Sundran and the maternal affection of Ichharan, does not meet the same fate, as that of Hippolytus the Greek victim of the lust of his step-mother Phaedra (who is the Greek version of Luna), of death, which meant inexorable exclusion from the society. In the hands of Qadar Yar, Puran the outcast is transformed through the grace of Guru Gorakh Nath into a *jogi,* who, after his spiritual enlightenment returns back to the society if only to bless a new beginning – the birth of Raja Rasalu. Luna, the accursed and hence a barren female, awakens as a consequence of Puran's blessings, to her possibility to redeem herself by giving birth to a son. Raja Rasalu

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born as a fulfilment of the blessing of Puran is in total contrast to his elder half-brother. While the lustfulness of Luna is tamed by the desire to give birth to a child, the rigour of the saintliness of Puran is tempered with the compassion for the fallen and the barren.

Both the *jogi* (Puran) and the Raja (Rasalu) in Qadar Yar's version are held together by a common paternality : or Raja Salvahan. One may be tempted to draw a comparison between this juxtaposition of the *Jogi* and the *Raja* with that identified between the Jogi and the Commissar by Arthur Koestler. Still more relevant will be a reference to the concept of *Sant-Sipahi* as it evolved within the Sikh ethos to give a concrete shape to the Sikh idea, on the one hand, of the social obligation of the saint to take on the responsibility of the world in which he lives, or is made to live, and, on the other, of the moral sanction of the king's right to rule in order to afford justice and maximum freedom to his subjects. Be that as it may, there is a more profound sense in Punjab in which the myth of Raja Rasalu is related to the historical situation of times in which Qadar Yar lived. To the extent to which the birth of Raja Rasalu is a fulfilment of the blessings of Puran, the saint, the myth became almost a correlate of the spiritual origins of the secular and political concerns of the Sikh faith. Just as a Jogi blesses the birth of the heir to the throne of Raja Salvahan and legitimises his title to Kinghood, there is a similar organic relationship between the spiritual blessing of the Sikh Gurus and the attainment of the political power by the Khalsa. Again the myth of Raja Rasalu comes handy to highlight the inherent conflict between the two polities: the established one in the shape of Salvahan's kingdom which had fallen a victim to its own inner decay and had become arbitrary, capricious and blind to the demands of justice, and the new emergent one which challenges the former to ultimately overthrow it so as to build a new and more just order to take its place. Raja Rasalu, though born of Salvahan, finds himself pitted against his sire because he could not endorse the arbitrary misrule of his father. In this regard, one may also draw attention to the element in the myth of the conflict between the unjust king and his justice-loving people. Till they are able to overthrow an unjust ruler, the people reserve to themselves the right to judge the justness of the royal dispensation. When Salvahan orders, on patently wrong assumptions, the execution of Puran, the official executioners manage to bypass his orders, thus sparing convict's life. This obviously betokens growing alienation of an unjust king from the affection and loyalty of his people who take recourse to internal subversion till the regime is pulled down by the saviour.

Raja Rasalu comes into conflict with his father on an altogether different plane. The source of the rupture of the son-father relationship in case of Puran and Salvahan is the jealousy and contempt aroused by Luna in the heart of Salvahan for his son Puran to the extent that the king orders execution of his son. Puran, however, surrenders

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himself to the attempted mis-carriage of justice by his father. He resolves his alienation from his father by becoming a disciple of Gorakh Nath that is by taking on the garb and role of an anchorite. But in the case of Raja Rasalu and Salvahan the conflict is not over a personal issue, it springs from the public issues of justice. Raja Rasalu protests against the callousness of his father against one of his subjects. Salvahan orders hanging of an unwed girl whom he wrongly suspects of being pregnant and thus having committed adultery. This blindness to the reality is highlighted by his discovery soon after the execution of the girl that she was indeed a virgin. It is against this arbitrariness and perversion of the state structure under a malevolent despot that Raja Rasalu registers his protest. He deliberately refuses to be a party to this oppressive system and exiles himself from his father's kingdom so as to go out to raise sufficient support against the unjust king whom he ultimately vanquishes to wrest the throne and establish a more just and humane state. The struggle of the Khalsa against paternalistic and authoritarian Mughal state or its successor Afghan Empire is of the same order as that of Raja Rasalu against Raja Salvahan, the false king. Its fulfilment was not merely in opting out like Puran that is the renouncer but in the way of Raja Rasalu who stakes and asserts a counter claim to the crown.

It should not be very difficult to see that Qadar Yar's interpretation of the myth derives its meaning and validity from the ideology of the Sikh struggle against the tyranny of the Mughal Empire and the high-handedness of the invaders from across the north western borders. This ideology perceived the alien rulers as cruel and inhuman and hence false kings. Against them, the Sikh ideology posited the idea of *Sacha Patshah,* the true king: benevolent, just and compassionate. That this perception constituted a radical departure from the medieval theory 'of the divine origin and right of the kings, as evidenced by the title of *Zil-i-Ilahi* (image of God) assumed by the Mughal Emperors, is apparent from the fact that it sanctified revolt against the unjust rulers. The political set-up thus came to be accepted as subject to human intervention as a fulfillment of the social obligation of the saint as an agent of God in history. This enabled the people, alienated from the over-lordship of the Mughal and Afghan empires, enter into an ongoing combat with their oppressors to ultimately overwhelm and overthrow them and establish their own title to the state. There are large many details in which this basic pattern is repeated in the myth of Raja Rasalu. Only the social and the cultural ethos of success of the oppressed people under the leadership of the Khalsa to bring down the unjust state came to have informed the interpretation of the myth of Raja Rasalu fighting against his father king and refusing to surrender his judgement about the latter's functioning.

Here again it will be noted that the challenge to the established power in the myth is motivated not by an amoral lust for power but as a discharge of the moral

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function of the saint to dislodge injustice and establish a just order. It is this element of justifying power as a means to re-establishing the moral order that distinguishes the Sikh struggle against the Mughal empire from the fratricidal feuds within the Mughal dynasty in every generation over the issues of succession. Thus the re-evocation of the ancient myth of Puran Bhagat and its extension with a view to establishing a corelationship between self-abnegation and self-assertion as ways of life is securely embedded in the assumption of sovereignty by the Punjabi people led by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The divine inspiration of the Sikh movement against the tyrannical alien masters involved lending a moral purpose to the Sikh struggle for power. Maharaja Ranjit Singh differed from the Mughal emperors or their local agents not in devising a new state structure but only in investing it with a moral sanction.

In the very nature of the myth of Raja Rasalu as a rebel against the unjust king is implied the basis for a critique of the political power whose legitimacy is established or eroded in the same measure in which it is responsive or otherwise to the aspirations of the citizens. This means, among other things, that the State is accepted only as an human institution and not something divine in origin or sacred in its functioning. It also implies the element of the public accountability of the king. Rooted as both these factors are in the collective consciousness of the anti-elitist stream of Punjabi culture bordering at times even at anarchist ideologies, they also underline an implicit tendency towards humanisation of social thought. The myth of Raja Rasalu seems to emphasise three distinct features of the inner motivations of the struggle of Punjabis against their kings and masters: estrangement of the people from an unjust State, the inalienable right of the individual to opt out of an oppressive system and the legitimacy of the people's revolt against the unjust kings. The king and the state in Punjabi consciousness are not accepted as absolute but relative categories. Defiance rather than submission and unflinching loyalty, thus emerges as the dominate value or the Punjabi worldview. As against the defender and upholder of tradition *(Maryada Purushotam)* hero of the midland epic *Ramayana*, the folk-heroes of Punjab, Raja Rasalu and Dulla Bhatti, are primarily rebels against the state. Thus, we find that the myth of Raja Rasalu operates at two distinct but mutually complimentary levels: celebrating the glory of a rebel hero on assumption by him of kingship and the gradual fall of kings from their moral obligation under the corrupting influence of power. Qadar Yar can be seen to mediate here between the ideal and the reality. Two parallel instances which immediately come to mind are Guru Gobind Singh's reflections in *Bachitar Natak,* on the sources of decay of religious faiths, almost at the same time when he was launching the order of the Khalsa, and the caution given by Bhai Gurdas the first priest of Golden Temple, the premier temple of Sikh faith, against even *Gurdwaras* turning into the abodes of mammon. Apparently, a critical awareness has always been

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the hallmark of the Sikh and typically Punjabi approach to religion, state and society.

From the foregoing analysis it is fairly logical to conclude that the revival of the myth of Puran Jogi and Rasalu during the reign of Ranjit Singh was not fortuitous; this fall-back upon the ancient myth was quite natural. The new experience, of waging crusades, challenging the imperial powers and laying foundations of a sovereign state had to be assimilated to the memory of the race. The creative genius of Qadar Yar found the myth serviceable for locating the new experience for exploits and conquests in the inner drives and passions of Punjabi consciousness and to accommodate it to the new stirring of imagination and emotion. It is quite remarkable that Qadar Yar who intoned this great myth also composed a *Var* to celebrate the exploits of one of the national heroes of Sovereign Punjab: Hari Singh Nalwa as well. Thus the topical and the abiding both can be seen to converge upon a single concern: to identify the new dimensions of heroism of Punjab. It is in this light that the description of the image of Raja Rasalu by I. D. Serebryakov can be appreciated:

> "The image of Rasalu is vivid and manifold: at times, it is that of a mischievous youth, then that of a strong warrior, then again he appears as a tender son and husband. His character is brought out in collisions with others. The Hero's personality is built up gradually: everything is significant – the story of his birth, the astrologist's forecast, the mother's admonitions, his interrelations with people, and the circumstances of every happening. A vivid narrative style contributes greatly to the effect. A battle is raging, horses wade fetlock-deep in blood. New fortress walls are erected, and to render them impervious to the enemy's assault, a youth is killed at the astrologist's behest, and his head immured in the wall. Feudal lords trample down the fields and ransack peasant homes, Moslem and Hindu hordes descend upon the peasants, and the earth is soaked with peasant blood. And in each of these pictures appears the heroic figure of *Rajah* Rasalu, a gallant fighter for justice".

Interpreted in broader socio-cultural terms, the rise of the Sovereign Punjab involved the extroversion of the literary sensibility. During the reign of Ranjit Singh there is a positive shift, in the typology of the hero of Punjabi romances, of the emphasis from the saintly introversion of consciousness, mysticism and the obsession with death and martyrdom to a crusading spirit of adventurism. For the first time in the history of Punjabi literature, the Princes were accepted as the beau-ideals. Their appearance on the scene synchronised with dreams of exotic beauties. The values of suffering and martyrdom which energised the Punjabi literature of an earlier period yielded pre-eminence to those of chivalry, crusading campaigns and conquests. Nobility of human ambition, joyous consummation of human endeavour and regal passions of high adventure and aristocratic expansiveness of worldly pleasures were the other values projected by new Punjabi *Qissa* poets such as Ahmed Yar as a proper fulfilment of a man. The heroes and heroines of the innumerable new story cycles

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introduced by the Punjabi poets of this period struggle and prevail rather than suffer and die. Their life styles extoll the virtues of ambition and determination on the one hand and beauty, taste, poise and social grace on the other. One can easily find the element of identification between the heroes of Punjabi*Qissa* of these times and the life-styles, bearing and manners of the new ruling elite.

A third important indicator of the impact of Ranjit Singh's age on the Punjabi literature lies in the emergence of a new type of literature, neither didactical nor mystical. This was literature of entertainment, skillful display of poetic virtuosity, sophistication of expression, ingenuously contrived narrative and interlacing of poetic design with learned references and allusions. This elitist literature was neither instructive as in the case of the best religious poetry nor lyrical seeking mystical communion with the ultimate reality. It was designed to delight through innovation of situation, complexity of structure and refinement of feeling. The basic thrust of the new literature was more aesthetic than the religious or mystical.

– Dr. Attar Singh

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ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

History reveals the persona of history makers through impressions manifested in sources created by them, or as a result of their influence and patronage. Art and architecture are such sources that prove to be indisputable and immortal physical evidences for providing an insight to the personality of the creator and patron. The buildings are like time-tested pyrite rocks containing imprints of prevailing socio-political and cultural values of a bygone era.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), a great lover of art and architecture bequeathed a great heritage to the nation by patronizing textiles, ceramics, metal works, decorative works, paintings, murals and historical monuments. Following accession by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the painters from erstwhile Hindu Principalities were attracted towards a new, vibrant source of patronage. Artists from the important painting centres were employed by the Maharaja and his circle to produce exquisite artworks. The artistic life of the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had its own dynamism; cities such as Lahore, Amritsar and Srinagar and others in Sikh kingdom produced artifacts for Maharaja and the leading members of the court. Well-established traditional industries flourished and grew because of his patronage.

After the consolidation of his empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh turned his attention to the creative and religious pursuits. Two cities that mainly benefitted from his royal patronage were – Lahore and Amritsar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh made Amritsar the spiritual capital, while Lahore was the temporal seat of his newly formed kingdom. Lahore was the city to be conquered to establish his sovereignty and hence the take-over of existing forts and palaces, which were customized to his needs and fancies. Amritsar was the holy city to be nurtured and cultivated as a symbol of his devotion to "Gurughar".

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Though the contribution of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in art and architecture had spread far and wide in the region of undivided Punjab and even beyond, Amritsar became major beneficiary of Maharaja's royal patronage in the field of art and architecture.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh during his reign constructed or adorned buildings which can be categorized as below:

- Religious buildings: Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, Takht Hazoor Sahib, Takht Patna Sahib, Krishna Mandir, Kashi Vishwanath Temple
- Forts: Gobindgarh
- Civic Structures: Summer Palace and other ancillary buildings in Rambagh Complex

Religious Buildings

The contributions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh range from small symbolic gestures of sending exclusive artifacts and gold for the temples to rejuvenating the architectural ambience of Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar.

Temples:

The *shikahras* of Kashi Vishwanath Temple at Varanasi bear a glittering testimony to the historic fact that one ton of gold was donated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh for the gold plating of the *shikhras*. Similarly the Maharaja, for the shrine of the goddess of Kangra, commissioned the silver doors with repousse work.

The Krishna temple built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Krishankot village near Gurdaspur-Amritsar highway reflects in all its glory the revival of Pahari murals and paintings. These paintings apart from using traditional motifs of Krishan Leela, also depict the colourful representations of the Sikh Gurus.

Gurdwaras:

After years of turmoil in Sikh history, in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period the artistic and the architectural activity gained a feverish pitch. Ranjit Singh first turned his attention to the holiest of the holy shrines – Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar.

Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar

It was in 1805 when Amritsar was incorporated in the dominion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh; thereafter the council of Sikhs headed by the Maharaja managed Harmandir Sahib. Enhancing the glory of the shrine was the first and the foremost on the priorities of the Maharaja. For this purpose, he invited and patronized skilled Muslim architects, masons and wood carvers from Chaniot now in Pakistan. Thus a group of Muslim architects, masons, carvers and other craftsmen were brought to Amritsar and lodged in Haveli Chaniotian situated inside the Lahore gate (Kucha Tarkhana, Galli Kawarwali).

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The craftsmen of high caliber, likes of Yar Mohammed Khan Mistri for gold plating work, Naqquash Badur-u-Mohiu-din for *naqquashi* and *jaratkari* (floral designs and inlay work) were employed to adorn the interiors of sanctum sanctorum and the surroundings. Maharaja Ranjit Singh also invited and patronized accomplished painters from Pahari regions of Himachal Pradesh (Parkhu), from Delhi-Jeevan Ram and Hasan Ali Din, to settle in Amritsar and Lahore.

Naqquashi and Jaratkari

The surface of marble slabs was first prepared by engraving the desired design of beautiful forms of vines, plants, flowers, birds, animals and human figure motifs with geometrical or floral borders to frame the pictures.

The figures were often idealized and symbolic, but always richly tinted with colours made from natural pigments of earth, stones, leaves and soot. The painting was executed working on small panels, the surface and the medium (paints) were kept studded with coloured and precious stone inlay work. The precious stones like onyx, cornelia, jasper and lapis lazuli were used for inlay work. The specimens of this work are seen on the exterior of sanctum sanctorum.

Gach and Tukri work

Gach, made of paste of fried gypsum, was applied to the surface and etched with delicate filigree designs before the paste could set. Afterwards, it was filled with colour or gold leaf. Tukri work was the cut clay work with mirror pieces embedded in it. Sheesh Mahal on the second storey of sanctum sanctorum, originally used as pavilion by Gurus, was decorated with mirror and coloured glass pieces in clay painted in variety of colours. Inscription of hymns from Gurbani on the walls and soffits of arches in golden letters set against red, green and blue ground add to the vitality of the interior space.

Repousse work

To achieve magnificence, repousse work in brass or copper gilt sheathing was introduced.

Floor patterns

The *parikrama* of Golden Temple was paved with marble stones specially commissioned from Jaipur and intricate and beautiful flooring patterns were created to enhance the divine experience of the pilgrims performing *parikrama*.

Gold plating

The skyline of Harmandir Sahib was set ablaze in glory by gold plating the gorgeous central dome and cupolas atop the kiosks on the third storey of sanctum sanctorum.

Thus, the Golden Temple, as we see it today is essentially the work of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The gilding of embossed plate above the marble skirt of sanctum

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sanctorum, the embellishment of the interior, were all renovated, perfected and furnished under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, so that the devotees may brood upon the interior splendour, after gazing at the beauty and wonder of the outerhouse and body of gods. An eclectic monument which has grown from the devotion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as such as through the skills of guild craftsmen.

The gold plate above the marble skirt of the main entrance to the sanctum sanctorum records the following statement that bears testimony to the dedicated effort of Maharaja Ranjit Singh performed with utmost humility:

> "That the Guru was kind enough to grant the privilege of service of the temple to his humble servant Ranjit Singh."

Other important Sikh shrines that were constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh are:

Takhat Sri Patna Sahib

Takht Sri Patna Sahib was originally built at Patna (Bihar) by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to mark the birthplace of Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh *ji*.

Takht Sri Hazoor Sahib

Maharaja Ranjit Singh constructed the present building of Takht Hazoor Sahib at Nanded during early 1830s. He dispatched money, artisans and labour from Punjab to fulfil this holy mission of raising a memorial at the place where the tenth Guru left for heavenly abode.

Gurdwara Dehra Sahib

Maharaja Ranjit Singh built the Gurdwara in the memory of Guru Arjun Dev. It marks the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev ji. It possessed architectural similarity to the Golden Temple (the dome and the skyline).

All these interventions by Maharaja Ranjit Singh were confined to his patronage in the realization of above relics, while in Amritsar his patronage gave way to the parentage of the architectural project right from the inception to its full growth. Outstanding examples in this case are:

- The beautiful gateways and the wall around city of Amritsar
- Gobindgarh fort
- Rambagh

Gobindgarh Fort

Gobindgarh was constructed in the west of the city Amritsar, on Gujranwala road. The original existing fort of Bhangi Sardar Gujjar Singh was enlarged and surrounded by a new wall and moat and renamed as Gobindgarh. Rear parts of the fort still exist. The massive structure of Gobindgarh fort is punctuated with numerous bastions and iron gates. The fort also housed the treasury and residence of the Maharaja.

In 1821, to strengthen the defence and security of the city, a ring of two concrete

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walls with a moat in between the two was thrown around the city of Amritsar. The inner wall was 25 yards wide, 7 yards high, constructed in kachcha (sun-dried) bricks and punctuated with 12 well guarded gateways to regulate the access to the city. One of these gates was named as Darwaza-e-Lahore. It was regarded as the main entrance to the city, addressing the processional route of Maharaja connecting the twin cities of Maharaja's royal stands in its original form, as the British replaced all others in 1866-68. The original wall constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was destroyed by the British first after occupation of the Punjab in 1849.

Rambagh Gate:

Rambagh gate linked the Rambagh to the city. A straight road was laid out in the form of an avenue to connect Rambagh Deorhi (entrance) to Rambagh gate and, beyond this gate, the road traverses through Bazaar Rambagh, Katra Ghanahiya and Karmo Deorhi to the Harmandir Sahib. This route acted as Maharaja's processional route from Rambagh to Harmandir Sahib.

Though some fixtures of this gate were removed and taken to Lahore in 1892 to be preserved in Lahore Museum, a fair image of the original structure can be reconstructed.

Rambagh:

After fulfilling his religious duties and setting his empire in order, Maharaja Ranjit Singh deserved to indulge, and it is in indulgence that everything that is instinctive as well as groomed comes to the fore and manifests itself in the most genuine impressions and forms closest to the heart of the creator. Rambagh conceived by Maharaja Ranjit Singh shows the humane and sensitive aspects of his character. A retreat in the lap of nature for himself and his loyal *sardars* was proposed in 1819 to be built within the erstwhile compound of a mud fort en route from Gobindgarh Fort to Batala.

The chosen site was landscaped on the pattern of Shalimar Bagh (Charbagh concept of Mughals), square in shape; it was surrounded by unnerving 14 high Nanakshahi brick masonry wall with *burjis* (kiosks) at the corners and outer ring of mud wall with a moat running all along this wall. The moat was filled with water brought from Hansli canal.

Unlike the Mughal concept of Charbagh planning, where the buildings are placed only at the opposite ends of longer cardinal axes leaving the intersection of axes or the centre of the whole composition free to create uninterrupted vista and symmetry for the local building, buildings in Rambagh are placed exactly on all the cardinal points where the axes culminate as well as the central intersection of symmetrical axes on a *chaupar* pattern. This arrangement makes the built form and open space relationship more incidental than formal, though laid on a geometrically symmetrical pattern, while in case of a typical Mughal conception, the garden is seen as a vista to

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the monument and retain their distinct identities. In Rambagh, the garden and the buildings merge together to create a more interactive environment as a whole. Few of the pavilions like structures are also asymmetrically placed in the layout to strengthen the above notion.

In the centre is the principal building – the Summer Palace, which served as residence for Maharaja Ranjit Singh during his visits to Amritsar. Around the Summer Palace are four buildings on its four sides connected by promenades lined with trees (flanking) along the North-South axis and rows of fountains on East-West axis. Along the North-South axis, on Northern end lies the building known as Service Club these days and on Southern end lies the Deorhi (the entrance to Rambagh complex). Along the East-West axis, on the eastern end lies the Reading Hall and on the western end lies an Aquarium.

In N-W quadrant of the layout is located a structure called Jaldhari-bathing place for the ladies of the court. In the S-W quadrant is the pavilion called Barahdari for the leisure activities of royal guests.

Kiosks (*burjis*) marked the four corners which demarcate the original boundary corners of the Rambagh. These *burjis* served as sentry posts at the strategic points on the boundary wall.

Thus, the Rambagh Complex is a rich milieu of variety of buildings, structures and pavilions which represent the great architectural heritage created to celebrate the glorious times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule.

Summer Palace

The summer palace was constructed under the supervision of Fakir Azeez-ud-din, Sardar Lehna Singh and Sardar Desa Singh Majithia, nobles of the Lahore Darbar at a cost of Nanakshahi Rs. 1,25,000/-. Originally, gardens were laid on an area of 84 acres.

The plan is a square with a double height central hall at its core. At the corners of the central hall are four chambers and all the four sides of the hall open out into rectangular bays which further lead into 14' wide ambulatory passage all around. There are series of arches dividing the interior space into bays as means of transition from one space to another.

The interior of the building has an interesting play of spaces. The double height central hall provides a visual and physical connection between the upper two storeys. The building also has a basement (*taikhana*) with thick walls punctuated with funnel like windows to channelize the air movement as well as allow diffused light inside to create cool comfort conditions in the hot climate of the region.

The façade of the building makes an interesting case study as a trend-setting architectural style of that era. All four sides are symmetrical in their composition –

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each having a two storeyed central frame flanked by three storeyed side bays.

The central frame is divided into two storeys with an eave and parapet supported on brackets flanked by two balconies as lower half of *jharokhas* (balconies). The lower storeys have five arched openings flanked by two trabeated doorways on both the sides. The openings are framed by fluted pilasters from the base upto their springing points and topped by multifoil arches with cusps contained within a rectangular border.

The bay at each corner is divided into three storeys with eaves at the string is rather austere than ostentatious. It is designed more on the pattern of a retreat or a royal country house where Maharaja could relate to the environment at a human scale in contrast to the royal court held at Lahore.

Stylistically, the Summer Palace, though, employing all the typical elements of the Mughal and Rajput architecture (multifoil cusped arches, pilasters, bracket supported caves, *jharokhas*, oriole windows), in its composition is more akin to a renaissance palazzo characterized by exploiting the principle of rhythm rather than to focus to achieve the unity in façade. Also, the sculpted skyline of a typical palace building gives way to a straight roof line. The juxtaposition of different volumes of buildings on the exterior relates directly to the interior space bringing it closer to the principle of 'form follows function.'

Here, freed from the rigid formal codes of religious architecture and functional constraints of defence architecture, a new secular form emerged going beyond a simplistic and eclectic semblance of elements of various styles to establish a new style in Sikh architecture. The emergence of the new style brought for the first time the architecture of this region in direct nexus with the contemporary architectural developments in Europe. The mannerist approach is evident in creating a new style by the way of consciously stripping the building of exuberant ornamentation and adopting a volumetric blocking of the building components rather than the prevailing two-dimensional façade treatment.

Deohri

The plan is a Greek cross with N-S arm as thoroughfare for the processional route of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, while E-W axis has lobbies at both ends having staircases that lead to the upper floors. On the upper floor, these lobbies are connected with a wooden bridge. The room in each quadrant of the Greek cross is a central square space with recessed openings or niches in the middle of the side walls, when seen from inside. The recessed openings in the thick walls create a visually dramatic and physically comfortable environment inside.

The main northern façade of the building is an excellent composition of parts and whole. The modular proportions of the façade give an excellent balanced view of the whole building.

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The central portal is a perfect square with central archway having half of the width of the portal. The central archway is flanked by two fluted columns of each side supported on a platform which is ¼th the width of central portion.

The central archway is crowned with an ogee arch further profiled by a cusped arch around it. The central portal is flanked by a rectangular side bay in 1:2 width-height ratio; the width of the bay being half the width of central portal. Each side contains a border framing a cusped arch, supported on circular columns.

Within the cusped arch is framed a *jharokha* with three sides (half hexagonal) bay window behind. The base of the *jharokha* is an inverted cupola shaped like a lotus. From the base the columns rise to support three cusped arches profiled by segmental arches and then a ribbed dome with a pinnacle crowns the whole *jharokha*.

To complete the composition, two circular minarets topped by a domed pavilion rise above the height of the building on the extreme corners.

The *Deorhi* is a fine example of Mughal and Rajput elements to achieve a balanced and sensitive composition of beautiful proportions.

Service Club

The structure on the northern end of the N-S axis is quite similar to the Deorhi in its planning as well as in architectural character. The ground floor plan of the building has a central passage bifurcating the whole building into two parts. This central nave leads to the symmetrically disposed rooms or chambers on both the sides. On the first floor, the envelope of the building is punctuated with number of *jharokhas*. Each room has been provided with *jharokha* to look out into the sprawling gardens all around. Vaulted roofs top the *jharokhas* supported on brackets.

A play of mass and void is created to achieve vitality and interest in the facade. A border made of alternate rectangular and square panels frames the central side bays of the façade. The pilasters at the opposite ends of the façade complete the composition.

Slenderness of the columns and sleekness of the eaves supported on sparsely spaced brackets further emphasize the airy lightness of the building. The building maintains similar façade composition and treatment as that Deorhi lying on the opposite end of its axis, thus achieving a complimentary relationship with its counterpart.

Reading Hall

The structure on the western end of the E-W axis shows the same spirit of exercising the creative freedom to create a whole with conventional elements of Mughal and Rajput style. The experiment here becomes bolder by the way of incorporating a new philosophy of design – form follows function. The functional components of

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the building are expressed in the form of building without any camouflaging. For example, the staircase and the terraces become attributes of form of the building.

The front elevation of the building is a symmetrical composition of five arched openings framed by sleek and slender columns. The end bays of the façade on lower storey are treated with a composition of rectangular panels.

The side elevation is a fine example of asymmetrically balanced composition of variety of elements brought together but critically balanced. The dynamic form with varying heights.

Baradari

Baradari is a square pavilion with twelve arched openings (three on each side). The raised platform of the pavilion has a floor pattern based on the game known as '*barah tehni*'. The three cusped arches on each side are supported on fluted columns with lotus shaped bases and capitals. The flat roof supported on the brackets has plain parapet with four corners crowned with small *burjis*.

Jaldhari

Jaldhari is an unassuming structure, square in plan, punctuated with various entries and exits to the pool inside.

The lower half of the building which is relatively opaque, has no windows to ward off the prying eyes and retain the privacy of the persons enjoying royal bath. The upper half of the building is punctuated with cusped arches with a line of rectangular ventilators at the base.

Burjis

An octagonal raised structure approached by a flight of steps was designed as a watch tower at each of the four corners of the wall around Rambagh. The octagonal base (platform) supports an octagonal pavilion. Each side of the pavilion has cusped arch in the centre framed by sleek columns erected at all the corners of the polygon. The whole structure is surmounted by a fluted dome, which has at its base an eave supported on brackets. Small in size but elegant in style, this piece of architecture is a treat for the eyes of the passersby.

Baradari, Hazoori Bagh

The Hazoori Bagh Baradari, the marble pavilion in the centre of the garden is one of the few remaining Sikh monuments in Lahore. Built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1818 with marble taken from various Mughal tombs and from the floor of the Hammam, a royal bath in Lahore fort. Elegant carved marble pillars support delicate cusped arches. The central area where Maharaja Ranjit Singh held court has a mirrored ceiling. The pavilion consisted of two storeys until it was damaged by lightning in 1932.

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Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

The tomb (*Samadhi*) of Ranjit Singh is outside the wall of the Badshahi Mosque. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's tomb was begun by his son Kharak Singh on the spot where he was cremated, and was completed by Dulip Singh in 1848.

The tomb is a splendid example of Sikh architecture with golden fluted domes and cupolas and balustrade around the top. The marble used was taken from various Mughal monuments in Lahore. The architectural character of the façade of the tomb is derived from the style followed in the Deorhi of Rambagh Complex, Amritsar. The ashes of Maharaja Ranjit Singh are contained in a marble urn in the shape of a lotus, sheltered under a marble pavilion inlaid with pietra aura in the centre of the tomb. Two small monuments to the west of main mausoleum commemorate Ranjit Singh's son Kharak Singh, grandson Naunihal Singh and their respective wives.

Epilogue

The vision of Maharaja in the area of religion, politics and art, was to synthesise pluralities from various cultures in a singular entity – individualistic in its own right. The principle was an extension of the idea of Sikh faith, to which he was extremely devoted.

– Dr Sarbjot Singh Behl

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21

ORGANIZATION OF THE KHALSA ARMY*

THE KHALSA IN PRE-RANJIT SINGH DAYS

Early Tactics of War – Guerilla Tactics: The ideal of a Khalsa Army, as such, may be said to have been created by Guru Gobind Singh and fostered and promoted later by the Guru's secular successor Banda Singh Bahadur. But, during the period of three decades following the execution of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Khalsa lost its old solidarity and became considerably disorganised and weakened. They were left without a secular or spiritual leader who could keep them together. And to add to their misfortunes, as it were, the government of the day was not slow to enforce repressive measures against them. The enormity of their sufferings increased, and some of the saddest events in Sikh history, indeed, took place during this period. The followers of the Guru were literally driven from pillar to post. Several hundreds of them, we are told by the author of the *Panth Parkash*, chose to leave their homes and lead a homeless life in jungles, hills and deserts rather than abjure their faith. But these troubles eventually proved a blessing in disguise. Compelled by economic necessity, these exiles would often swoop on the villages at the foot of the hills or on the skirts of the deserts and carry away all that they could. The government, on the other hand, organized special moving columns of light cavalry (*Gashti Fauj*) and set them in their pursuit. The Sikh exiles, therefore, almost to a man, were forced to equip themselves for offensive and defensive fight. The horse and the musket thus became the constant companions of a Sikh. In the course of these unequal conflicts, the exiled bands of Sikhs were led to develop novel devices, subterfuges and methods of fighting and strategy (guerrilla warfare) which stood them in good stead in

* Courtesy: Maharaja Ranjit Singh - Centenary Volume, Languages Department, Punjab,

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subsequent years.

EARLY ORGANIZATION

The life and death struggle into which the Sikhs were plunged during these years did not prove altogether unfruitful. It produced some of the very capable military leaders who led them on the bolder and more successful enterprises and also conferred upon them the blessing of military discipline. Amongst these may be mentioned Nawab Kapur Singh, Buddha Singh Sukkerchakkia and Bagh Singh Hallowalia, who are credited with having conceived the idea of establishing a sort of military organization. The small groups of tens and twenties into which the Sikhs were divided were all merged (1734) into two larger groups called the Buddha Dal and the Taruna Dal, i.e., groups of the older and the younger folks each having a recognized leader of its own. The author of the Shamsher Khalsa estimates the total strength of the Khalsa Dal between 1,500 and 2,000 men.

The Swelling of the Khalsa Ranks: The invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 threw the whole province of the Punjab into utter confusion. The author of the *Ibratnama*, which is almost a contemporary account, gives us to understand that for a considerable time even after the departure of Nadir, law and order could not be restored. Pillage and anarchy became the order of the day. Such a confused state of affairs was too tempting for the intrepid and adventurous spirits, and the ranks of the Khalsa began rapidly to swell. There was, indeed, no dearth of soldiers in the country. The art of war was still in its infancy. Primitive weapons like the sword, the spear, the lance and the dagger which demanded little or no technical skill were still in general use, so that every able-bodied man was a potential soldier. A daredevil young man did not find it difficult to collect around him a number of equally bold and ambitious men from his village or clan and offer his services to a chief on such terms as he could secure for himself and his men. The chiefs were, on their own part, only too glad to welcome accession to their strength. As many as sixty-five group leaders (*Jathedars*) as they were called, appeared on the scene, and established their respective *derahs* (camps) in open defiance of the ruling authority.

The Dal Khalsa 1748: There was no unity of command and the various *Jathedars* were scarcely, if at all, combined for a collective purpose. The anarchical condition of the country, however, invited and held out hopes of greater success with organized military operations. Some of the more talented and far-seeing Sikh leaders were not slow to realize the necessity no less than the advantage of organizing the entire resources of the community. The aged leader Nawab Kapur Singh, who had a large share in the earlier organization of the Buddha and the Taruna Dals, was still active and commanded the highest esteem and regard amongst his co-religionists. In consultation with other senior members of the Panth, he succeeded in persuading the

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group leaders who had gathered together in Amritsar, on the occasion of the Baisakhi festival, to pool their resources for national service. The entire fighting strength of the Khalsa was thus brought to serve the common cause and was given the name of the Dal Khalsa or the National Army of the Sikhs. The chief command of the united forces was now entrusted to Sadar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, a daring and a gifted soldier. Some re-grouping of the *Jathas* was also made and many of the minor groups were merged into bigger ones, so that the entire Dal was distributed into eleven big divisions, each with its distinctive badge and banner.

Beginning of the Territorial Power of the Sikhs – the Rakhi System: A fair amount of unity and understanding was, thus, established among the Jathedars, and each felt readily inclined to assist his neighbour. The political condition of the country proved of further help and assistance to them. The repeated invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1748-61), had thrown the Punjab into utter confusion and removed even the last vestiges of authority from the country. This unfortunate Province was thus exposed to the free-booting excursions of brigands and highwaymen. It was literally the rule of 'Might is Right'. Poor peasantry was being ground down by the big *zamindars*, revenue failed, trade and industry came to a stand still. The peace-loving section of the population were in dire need of protection and failing the government they would welcome this protection community, well-equipped for purposes of offensive and defensive fighting who could extend this protection at the time were the Sikhs with their Dal or the National Army. Their gifted leaders thus seized another opportunity and by offering to the people the necessary protection laid the foundations of their future territorial and political power in the Province. One or more units of the National Army were detailed for the purpose and placed in charge of the territory that was brought under their system of protectorate. Arrangements were also made for reinforcing these divisions in the case of necessity by way of building small slices of territory in four out of the five *doabs* of the Punjab were thus taken under the Rakhi system and a regular source for the maintenance of the National Army was thus secured – the usual rate being 1/5 of the revenue of the protected territory at the time of each harvest. These slices of territory served as so many tentacles that eventually helped in spreading the territorial sway of the Khalsa and, before the century closed, twelve of the big Sikh leaders had established themselves as masters of important principalities in the Province.

Change due in the old System: During the closing years of the eighteenth century when the Sikh leaders were busy in establishing their authority over the province of the Punjab, the Indian princes, in the rest of the country were meeting with a new experience in the methods and strategy of warfare. The use of artillery and the employment of large masses of disciplined infantry by Europeans in India had rendered

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the old tactics of war ineffectual. They had, in fact, clearly shown that cavalry could not long hold out against a steady fire of guns or muskets. Accordingly, some of the Indian princes like Sultan Tipu, Mahadaji Scindia and Jawsant Rao Holkar had already reformed their respective armies on the European model. Ranjit Singh, too, when he came to power perceived the advantages of the new arms, namely, the artillery and infantry. Himself being one of the freelancers and like them having been brought up in the military traditions of his race, he soon came to realize that even if the Sikhs had been successful against the Mughals and the Durranis, it was not possible for them to be able to hold their own against a European nation unless they gave up their indigenous weapons and old tactics of war and adopted the new ones in their place. The close proximity of the British on the other side of the Sutlej was a constant reminder to Ranjit Singh, that brave and intrepid though his men were, they could be no match against an equal body of soldiers in the East Indian Company who were trained in western methods and strategy of war. He was convinced that a change in the training and discipline of his army had become imperative and that, unless it was done, not only would the efficiency and value of his army remain unchanged, but their very existence might be jeopardized at a critical moment. Excellent material, indeed, he had with him. What was required was patient, persistent and earnest endeavour on his part to persuade his people to accept the change. How far did Ranjit Singh succeed in his efforts could be known from the study of the military records of his government, as well as from other facts of the history of his reign.[1]

II

Ranjit Singh's Infantry

Reforms introduced by Ranjit Singh: The Khalsa army under Ranjit Singh presents an entirely new picture. The change is distinctly perceptible in three important directions, namely, the organization, the equipment, and the mode of fighting. The first and foremost difference that strikes one, on a comparison of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century and the Sikh army under Ranjit Singh is in their composition. The two branches, namely, the infantry and the artillery, which were not considered important in the eighteenth country, now came to be regarded as the mainstay of military strength. And, as may be seen from the table given in later pages, these two branches show a considerable increase in strength. This change in composition was the outcome, as already remarked, of a general change of opinion regarding military tactics and the efficiency of various arms. A steady fire from guns or muskets was considered more conducive to success than irregular attacks of cavalry or a guerrilla mode of warfare. Again, the maintenance of a standing national army, regularly paid from the treasury, displaced the old system of feudal levies by the chiefs. It was indeed a radical change in the old order of things, and the scrapping, though gradual at first, became complete

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in the end.

Infantry – Its early History: The Infantry, as the previous military history of the country reveals, never became popular in India, either with the Mughals or with the Sikhs and the Marathas. A foot soldier was held in poor esteem, and little or no consideration was shown him. In the times of Akbar, he was included in the pay lists with the door-keepers, the palace-guards, the letter carriers and the *palki*-bearers. Similary, with the Sikhs in pre-Ranjit Singh times, infantry was mostly relegated to the position of garrisoning forts. But, as already explained, the prevailing views about military tactics and the usefulness of different arms in time of war were undergoing thorough change. And Ranjit Singh, in common with other Indian princes, shared this view and applied himself to the task of raising trained and disciplined battalions of infantry.

In the beginning, the Sikhs would not get themselves enrolled as foot-soldiers, and the Maharaja invited the Poorbias and the other deserters from the East India Company's troops for recruitment, both as instructing officers and soldiers. It is said, that in order to make the service popular, Maharaja himself took to attending parades in person and extending considerable favours to infantry men. Further, for those who joined this branch the conditions of service were made specially attractive with the result that in the course of time, Infantry Service became popular with the Sikhs and with other communities of the Punjab. An examination of the pay rolls upto *Sambat* 1870 (1813AD) shows that the bulk of the infantry men consisted of Hindustanis, Gurkhas, and Afghans; whereas those of *Sambat* 1875 (1818 AD) and onwards reveal that the Sikh element was becoming more pre-dominant.[2] In 1838, i.e, a year previous to the demise of the Maharaja, the total strength of the Infantry branch stood at 26,600 men with a monthly salary at Rs. 2,27,600. A glance at the Pay lists reveals another interesting fact and that is that both the regimental officers and the rank and file were indiscriminately filled with Sikhs, Hindus and Mohammedans. There were also a number of European officers: French, English and Italians, etc. So long as one was efficient in his calling, the Maharaja made no distinction on the basis of creed or community either in giving service or promotion.

In regard to the organization and constitution of the Infantry branch, it may be said, that Ranjit Singh bestowed assiduous attention to it. The recruits were, in the beginning, trained and drilled by the ex-Naiks of the Company's troops, but later on[3] the Maharaja gave employment to a number of able European officers like Ventura, Avitabile, Allard, Court and others, who considerably raised the efficiency of his troops.

Constitution of an Infantry battalion: As in the modern system, in Infantry a battalion was the administrative and manoeuvring unit which contained about 800

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men and was commanded by an officer of the rank of a commandant called *Kumedan* (Fr. Commandant). Next to the *Kumedan* were the Adjutant and the Major who assisted him in his duties. To each battalion was attached a *Munshi* (clerk), whose business was to call and check the rolls, *Mutassadi* (accountant) who kept the regimental accounts, and a *Granthi* who recited the Sikh scriptures. The Granth Sahib was kept generally near the regimental flag.

Each battalion was supplied with a number of camp followers or Amla. It usually consisted of *Khalasi*, *Saqqa* (water-carrier), *Sarban* (camel-driver), *Gharyali* (gongsmen), *Jhandabardar* (flag-bearer), *Beldar* (spadesman), *Mistri* (smith), *Najjar* (mason) and *Langri* (cook). Light tents and beasts of burden were allowed in a fixed proportion to each battalion of infantry.

Cost of maintaining a battalion of Infantry: The following statement prepared from the records of Ranjit Singh's government will enable to form an idea of the annual cost incurred to maintain a battalion of infantry. The statement is based on the scheduled rates or *Ain* sanctioned by the Maharaja in *sambat* 1884 (1927-28 AD), in the case of a *Paltan* (battalion) of infantry to be raised and maintained by S. Hari Singh Nalwa in lieu of the *Jagir* given to him.

Strength and Salary	per annum 632 men	Rs. 56,892
i) Combatants	576	Rs. 4,447 per month
ii) Non-combatants	56	Rs. 264 per month
iii) Contingencies		Rs. 30 per month
	Total 632 men	Rs. 4,741 per month
Estimated cost of equipment		Rs. 12,106
i) Uniform after every two years.		
ii) Tents after every three years.		
iii) Animals for carriage and transport.		
iv) Ammunition and magazine equipment.		
v) Repairs.		
vi) Contingencies.		
To make up for deficiency in the Income from Jagir and other sources of income		Rs. 13,100
Total estimated cost of maintenance of Infantry battalion 632 strong		Rs. 82,100

To meet these expenses, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa was given a *Jagir* of the annual value of Rs. 67,100/-, which, together with the estimated income of Rs. 15,000/- per

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year on account of deductions for kit and clothing from the pay of servicemen, would make the total of Rs 82,100/-.

The details regarding equipment, etc., are equally interesting and instructive and enable us to form an idea of the prevailing prices of various articles required for the Military department:

O/C of uniform of men and officers	...	Rs. 3,596
O/C *Doali-o-toshdan* (saddles and leather-pouches etc;) Rs. 1/8/0 per piece	...	Rs. 720
O/C Tufang (Matchlocks) @ Rs. 16 per piece	...	Rs. 7,680
O/C Tents	...	Rs. 1,100
O/C *Jhanda* (flags)	...	Rs. 30
O/C 2 banners (*Nishan*)	...	Rs. 50
O/C Cooking utensils	...	Rs. 250
O/C Musical instruments	...	Rs. 200
O/C Camels for transport @ Rs. 60 per camel	...	Rs. 3,000
Total	...	Rs . 16,526

Further details given in connection with the pay of men and officers of this battalion will be found equally interesting:

		Rs.
A) Combatants		
Commandant	one	@ 100 p.m.
Adjutant	one	@ 60 p.m.
Major	one	@ 15 p.m.
Subedar	5 men	@ 105 p.m.
Havaldar	20 men	@ 220 p.m.
Naik	20 men	@ 180 p.m.
Quarter Havaldar	5 men	@ 40 p.m.
Nishanchi (banner-bearer)	2 men	@ 24 p.m.
Privateers	505 men	@ 3,535 p.m.
Total		Rs 4,279[4]
Establishment or Non- Combatants:		
Langri (Cooks)	10 men	@ 40 p.m.
Saqqa (water carriers)	10 men	@ 40 p.m.
Sarban (Camel drivers)	7 men	@ 35 p.m.
Jhanda bardar (flagsmen)	4 men	@ 16 p.m.
Gharyali (gongsmen)	4 men	@ 21 p.m.
Khalasi	7 men	@ 36 p.m.
Smiths and carpenters	4 men	@ 30 p.m.
Beldars (diggers, etc)	7 men	@ 42 p.m.

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Harkara (runner)	one men	@ 04 p.m.
Total	...	264

Strength and efficiency of Sikh Infantry: The following table is compiled from the records of Ranjit Singh's Government and is intended to show how far the Maharaja eventually succeeded in making Infantry service popular with his men.

Year		Strength	Monthly Salary (Rs.)
1876 (1819 A.D)	...	7,748	60,172
1880 (1823 A.D)	...	11,681	84,162
1885 (1828 A.D)	...	15,825	1,16,284
1890 (1833A.D)	...	20,577	1,67,962
1895(1888 A.D)	...	26,617	2,27,660
1900 (1843A.D)	...	37,791	4,83,056
1902 (1845 A.D.)	...	53,962	5,70,205

It will be noticed that the estimated strength of combatants is 576 men @ Rs 4,447 per mensem, whereas the actual strength of the battalions was 560 men @ Rs. 4,279 per mensem.

Ranjit Singh's greatest concern, as evident from the account of his conversation reproduced in their Journals by European visitors at his court, was to raise the efficiency of his regular army and to bring his regulars up to the level of the East India Company's troops. He was unremitting in his care to keep this army in a most efficient state of equipment and training. Be it said to the credit of the Sikhs also that they mastered the complicated manoeuvres of a European army and all the tactics of European warfare. Between the years 1842 and 1845, when almost all the European Officers had left the service, the Indian officers maintained the discipline and efficiency of the Khalsa. Furthermore, in 1845-46, when their efficiency was put to an acid test during the war with British, they were found equal to the occasion.

III

Artillery

Artillery – its History: The Sikhs, previous to the time of Ranjit Singh had not familiarized themselves with the use of heavy pieces of artillery, although they used to employ occasionally small guns called *Zamburas* (swivels) in their warfare. But they placed their chief reliance on cavalry, and right up to the close of the eighteenth century, they could not shake off their belief in its effectiveness. Ranjit Singh, as we have had occasion to observe before, had a wonderful insight and intuition in military matters. As in the case of infantry so in that of artillery, he recognized their use and

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importance and was bent upon perfecting both the arms for his military service. Accordingly, when the infantry had been put through its facings in modern methods of drill and warfare, the artillery received the Maharaja's attention, and in the course of time he succeeded in organizing a regular ordnance department.

As in the case of infantry so in that of artillery, Ranjit Singh had to import both officers and gunners from outside the Punjab during the earlier years of the organization of this branch of his army service. The pay rolls of the first few years reveal that the bulk of the personnel of artillery consisted of non-Punjabis, mostly the Poorbias. But the Maharaja was anxious to train his own countrymen as gunners. It was fortunate that the Sikhs did not evince any strong aversion to artillery, as they had done when they were enrolled and drilled as infantry men. They had already changed their ancestral bow and spear for the matchlock in quite recent times. The Maharaja, therefore, met with practically no opposition on the part of the Sikhs, who required but little persuasion to become proficient in the use of guns. He imported a number of Europeans and employed them on liberal salaries for the purpose of instructing his countrymen.

The European Officers of Ranjit Singh's Artillery: Of the Europeans whom the Maharaja took into his service at one time or another, the most conspicuous figure in the Artillery was Claude Auguste Court. Another, though not so brilliant, was Alexander Gardner. He was popular with his troops and was commonly known as Gardauna Sahib.[5] Under the guidance of these and other officers, the Sikhs became excellent gunners, and the Maharaja's artillery became a highly organized and efficient arm of his military service. Sir C. Gough and Cunningham both bear testimony to the fact that the Sikh guns were served with great rapidity and precision during the Anglo-Sikh wars.

Organization: The *Topkhana* or the artillery department was divided into different sections. Section (1) comprising *Topkhana Jinsi* or mixed batteries, viz, *gavi* or those driven by bullocks, *aspi* or those driven by mules and horses, and *hoboth* or the howitzer. Section (2) comprising *Topkhana aspi* or purely horse batteries; and section (3) comprising *Zumburas* and *Ghubaras* or camel swivels and mortars.

The organization and internal economy of a battery very much resembled that of an infantry battalion. The number of guns in *ajinsi* battery varied from ten to twenty-five and sometimes even more, while in a horse battery it ranged from six to ten pieces, the usual number being eight. A *derah Zamburakkhana* comprised about sixty swivels. The average strength of a ten-gun battery was two hundred and fifty men, including non-combatants. The command of a battery was held by an officer of the rank of Commandant assisted by an Adjutant and a Major. From an examination of the list of establishment of each battery, it appears that a battery was divided into sections of two guns each. We find that the number of *Jhandabardars* (flag-bearers)

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and of the *gharyalis* (strikers) of the hour-gong varied from four to five in a battery of eight to ten guns, although the number of the remaining staff of the establishment, i.e. *beldars, mistris, saqqas*, etc, was one for each gun.

For purposes of administration, however, each gun in a battery was treated as a sub-unit. It had about eight or nine men attached to it, who were placed under the charge of a *jamadar*, assisted by a *hawaldar* and *naik*.

Strength and Efficiency: The strength of the artillery at different periods of the Sikh rule stood as follows:

Year		No. of Guns		
	Strength	Guns	Swivels	Monthly salary
1885 (1818-19A.D.)	834	22	190	5,840
1885 (1828-29 A.D)	3778	130	280	28,390
1895 (1838-39 A.D)	4,535	188	280	32,906
1900 (1843-44 A.D)	8,280	282	300	82,893
1902 (1845-46 A.D)	10,524	376	300	89,251

REMARKS: Besides this number there were about one hundred pieces placed in the various forts of the kingdom.

As regards the efficiency which this arm of the Maharaja's military service had attained under unremitting personal care and interest, it cannot do better than quote the testimony of certain British military officers, who had fairly good opportunities of personally witnessing the drill and manoeuvres of the Sikh army and who may be taken to be competent judges of what they have described.

Lieutenant Barr, who accompanied Sir C. M. Wade with the Army of the Indus in January 1839, speaking of the battery attached to General Court's brigade, says:

> "On our arriving in front, they (gunners) saluted us, and the general (Court) then directed the native commandant, a fine soldier-like-looking men, handsomely accoutered, to put them through their drill. Thus they performed with great credit, their movements being executed with a celerity and precision that would have done honour to any army. The orders were given in French, and the system of gunnery used by that nation has also been adopted. At the conclusion of the exercises, we walked down line and inspected the ordnance. The two guns on the right of the battery were six-pounders and were the same that Lord William Bentinok had presented to Ranjit Singh at Ropar. The rest were cast by himself from their model, and appear almost equally good, the precise number of pieces I saw, I forget, but I think nine, including two small mortars for hill service. We then tried some of his fuzes, which are very good, and burn ture; and his portflares are also tolerable, but when compared with those in use with every other part of the Sikh army, admirable; as with latter, they are nothing but cases filled with pounded brimstone

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indifferently rammed down. All the shot was formed of beaten iron, and cost a rupee each and the majority of the shells were composed of pewter, which he told us answered uncommonly well. When it is considered that all we saw was the work of the General's own knowledge and we reflect, on the difficulties he has had to surmount, it is a matter almost of wonder to behold the perfection to which he has brought his artillery.

"The men dressed something like our own horse artillery, except that, instead of helmets, they wear red turbans (the *Jamadars*' or officers' being of silk), which hang down so as to cover the back white trousers, with long boots, black waist and cross belts; and black leather scabbard with brass ornaments."

Casting of Guns: I have not come across any descriptive account of the mode in which the guns were cast in the Sikh times. But the fact that Ranjit Singh had a considerable number of guns cast in his own foundry at Lahore and that these, so far as strength, finish and general appearance was concerned, were as good as those used in the British army of the East India Company, seems to leave little doubt in our mind that the art of manufacturing guns was fairly advanced in the Punjab in the early nineteenth century.

The following which is taken bodily from my article in the *Journal of Indian History*, published in September 1922, will enable us to form an idea of the materials used in making a gun and the cost thereof.

(The figures relate to the casting of the gun named Top Nikodarwali (probably cast in a foundry at Nikodar in the Jullundur District) under the charge of Khalifa Nur-ud-din and Qada Khan, September 1819-August 1820.)

		Rs.	Anna	Paisa
Charges of labourers	...	21	12	0
Charges of 4 skilled workmen @ Rs. 50 p.m	...	200	0	0
Miscellaneous cash expenses	...	40	1	6
Cowdung (Upla)	...	0	8	0
Plaster (gachen)	...	0	12	0
Diet money of workmen (khurak karigaran)	...	4	0	0
Sweeper (Halak-khor)	...	1	2	6
Iron rod (tar-ahani)	...	1	5	0
Eggs of fowls (baize murgh)	...	2	0	0
Clarified butter (roghan zard)	...	1	4	0
Oil seeds for offerings (til siyah barai tassadug)	...	0	8	0
Incense (aspand-o-gugal)	...	0	8	0
Wheat flour (arad khushka)	...	2	8	0
Diet money (khurak mazduran)	...	1	0	0
Oil (tel siyah)	...	2	8	0
Cloth for wax	...	0	12	0

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Crude Sugar (qund siyah)	...	2	4	0
Sweets (Shiriai)	...	1	4	0
Cloth for workmen (poshak karigran)	...	4	0	0
Offerings to saint (niyaz Pir Sahib)	...	11	4	0
		1	14	0
Total		296	1	16
(II) Materials (jins) mds	.....	376	11	12
Copper (brass)	....	30	1	0
Zinc (jist)	...	20	0	12
Borax (sohaga)	...	1	10	0
Firewood (hema sokhtani)		325	0	0
Total		376	11	12
Grand Totals – Cash	...	260	13	6
Materials – Maunds	...	376	11	12

The prices of these articles are not stated in the papers from which these figures are taken, but we gather from other documents, also found in the same bundle of records, that they must have cost approximately as follows:

	Rs.	annas	paisa	
Copper ...	2,1000	0	0	@ Rs. 70 per maund
Zinc ...	820	0	0	@ Rs. 41 „ „
Borax ...	14	0	0	@ Rs. 11 „ „
Firewood ..	45	0	0	@ Rs.14 for one hundred maunds.
Total	2,979	0	0	

Thus the total cost of this gun was approximately Rs. 3,240.

Average Annual Expenditure to maintain 6-gun battery: It may also be of interest to mention here that a careful examination of various papers connected with artillery extending over nearly ten years reveals an average annual expenditure of a gun for the pay of officers and men, and the upkeep of horses, etc. at Rs. 5,600. The annual expenditure for maintaining a troop of horse artillery of six guns was approximately as follows:

Furniture consisting of saddles and other trappings, tents and flats, etc. Rs. 3,000

Food of animals:

(i) 104 Horses

(ii) 52 Mules

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(iii) 250 Bullocks	Rs 19,000
Pay of officers and men	Rs 12,000
Total	Rs 34,000

IV

CAVALRY

Cavalry – old type – With the exception of a few cavalry regiments which were through a course of training on western lines by the Maharaja's French Officer, Jean Francois Allard, the main body of Ranjit Singh's cavalry (*Ghorcharah Fauj*) continued to form a distinct and independent branch of his army service. It was organized on the model of the old Khalsa army and followed their traditional methods of fighting.

Reasons for Retaining it: It might seem rather strange that Ranjit Singh should have tolerated the two systems to persist side by side, although in his own estimation the value of the irregular cavalry, as a military weapon, did not stand very high. A study of the political and social conditions, however, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, would reveal the Maharaja's shrewd common sense, an outcome of an intimate knowledge of the leanings and capacity of his people. The Sikh population of the Punjab was practically soldier to a man. The country under their possession at the time presented the appearance of a vast military camp, with a number of powerful Chiefs and Sardars, each having a large body of faithful retainers besides fairly good resources of men and material, at his command. The follower of a chief claimed a share in the spoils of conquest as a matter of right, and in his corporate capacity, regarded himself as an equally true representative of the Khalsa. Since Ranjit Singh did not consider his position quite secure, at least in the earlier years of his reign, it would have been far from prudent on his part not to respect popular prejudices and privileges. Having been able to retain the loyalty, ensure the contentment, and enlist the support of the entire Khalsa community, he saw no harm in allowing a portion of his military service to continue on the old system. These soldiers, he recognized, were not amenable to strict rules of discipline, but, being born horsemen, were always happier when engaged in an enterprise attended with difficulties and dangers. Bearing this fact in mind and realizing how he stood, he could ill afford to ignore this vast body of experienced cavalry.

Delicate Situation of Ranjit Singh: Moreover, the Khalsa were proud of their past. They remembered all their hard struggles and were not unnaturally ambitious of retaining their hard-won freedom. Ranjit Singh did not fail to realize his own limitations. His territory mostly lay in the Majha, or the Central Punjab, and was not very extensive. He was hemmed in on three sides by powerful Mohammedan chiefs. The valley of Kashmir and the lower hills were still in the grip of the Afghans. Between the rivers

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Jhelum and the Indus, sturdy warlike tribes, such as the Gakhars, the Awans, and the Tiwanas, had the country divided amongst themselves. On the north-western side of India, Peshawar was the centre of Afghan rule. The governors of the Derajat, Multan, and Bahawalpur still owed loose allegiance to the Kabul Government. In the event of a combination of these hostile elements against him, Ranjit Singh rightly thought that he could not rely for support upon his co-religionists with greater assurance than upon the salaried or mercenary troops who comprised his *Fauj-i-Ain*, (regular army).

Classification of Cavalry: Ranjit Singh's history is not only one of valour but considerate strategy. When he began to subdue one Sikh chief after another, he employed great tact. He did not disband their forces but absorbed them lock stock and barrel into his own. At the same time, he recognized the wisdom of not abolishing the custom of granting military fiefs all at once. This he did so gradually that he was hardly perceptible at first, and in its place kept substituting the principle of assignments. In this way, in the course of time, he raised a regularly paid standing cavalry and allowed them to continue in their traditional way of the old Khalsa cavalry for some time. Later on he introduced new measures, and accordingly, we find from the records of his Government that the cavalry of Ranjit Singh became divided into the following three, namely:-

1) Regular Cavalry.
2) Ghorcharah Fauj
3) Jagirdari Fauj

Regular Cavalry: The regular cavalry, which had been trained and organized by General Allard,[6] was numerically the smallest part of the Maharaja's main cavalry forces. Of this arm of his service, there is but little to say, except that both of the Cuirassiers and the Dragoons were a fine body of men, in appearance and equipment no less than in drill and discipline.

Strength and Expenditure: The following table compiled from the Records of the Sikh Government shows the strength of the regular cavalry at different periods of the Sikh rule.

Sambat	Year	Strength	Monthly Salary in rupees.
1876	(1819 A.D.)	750	11,723
1880	(1823 A.D.)	1,656	41,609
1885	(1828 A.D.)	4,315	,03,970
1890	(1833 A.D.)	3,914	86,544
1895	(1838 A.D.)	4,090	90,375
1900	(1843 A.D.)	5,381	1,61,660
1902	(1845 A.D.)	6,235	1,95,925

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Ghorcharah Fauj – Its History and Character: The *Ghorcharah Fauj* had an interesting genesis. It would seem that the creation of this force was the result of a policy dictated partly by military necessity and partly by political expediency. As Ranjit Singh had no other claim but that of the sword to compel the allegiance of those whom he had subdued, he was naturally anxious to keep the representatives of the server powerful familes of the province near his court practically as hostages. By the bestowal of distinctions and other marks of favour, he created in them feelings of love and loyalty for himself and his successors. He used wonderful tact to secure their contentment and even gratitude, and he did all he could to compensate those whom he had, for one reason or another, dispossessed of their lands and properties. To those who were of peaceful disposition, he granted small cash allowances, while the petty chieftains and their trained warriors were readily taken over and absorbed into the army. It is safe to say that the major portion of Ranjit Singh's irregular cavalry was the outcome of this conciliatory line of policy.[7] For instance, the troops of the Ramgarhia *Misl* and those of Sardar Milkha Singh Thehpuria of Rawalpindi were bodily taken over and formed two big divisions, known respectively as the *Derah* Ramgarhia and the *Derah* Pindiwala. Similarly, the troops of the Sardars of the Nakkai and the Kanhaiya *Misls*, were absorbed into the corps commanded by Princes Kharak Singh and Sher Singh, respectively, whereas the followers of other smaller chiefs were amalgamated en bloc, from time to time, with the division known as Derah Naulakha and the Derah Ardalyan.

Ghorcharah Fauj – Its organization: The rank and file of the Ghorcharah army were recruited from amongst those who had received such military training as they possessed in the old methods of warfare. They knew very little of the principles of modern organization or of the science of war, and indeed, they honestly believed that the dash of a cavalry charge and the reckless courage combined with the momentum of a rapid pell-mell assault were better calculated to overpower an enemy than the even and slow fire from infantry ranks. On frequent occasions, in the course of conversation, they would try to bring this fact home to the mind of the Maharaja. The Maharaja for his own part was shrewd enough to realize the position and did not, therefore, consider it prudent or profitable to insist on the re-modeling of these troops on modern lines. They were allowed to retain their old organization and constitution with only slight modifications here and there. For instance, some foreign terms such as 'a commandant' and 'a major' are occasionally met with in the pay rolls of even this branch of the service.

There was neither a fixed system of regimentation in its ranks, nor was the entire irregular force placed under any one man holding the chief command. Each Derah, or camp, formed a complete unit by itself and had on its regimental staff one Commander, with no specified rank, assisted by one subordinate officer. The clerical establishment

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consisted of a Vakil[8] (*munshi*), and an accountant (*mutsaddi*). The ensign (*Nishanchi*) and the chief drummer (*dhaunsa nawaz*) are also borne on the list of the Staff officers. To each *Derah* was attached one *Granthi* (reader of the Sikh scripture).

A *Derah* was composed of several subordinate groups called *Misls*. This term seems to have come into use some time in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and denoted the small groups or bands of horsemen into which the more daring Sikhs had organized themselves during their period of exile, to which a reference has already been made. Considering their origin and the circumstances in which they had to live, it was natural to expect that these bands or associations would be composed of members of the same clan or of those who were otherwise more or less closely related to each other. Usually, they followed the lead of the head of the clan or of one who happened to be the most daring member of the group. This practice persisted even afterwards when these small groups coalesced into one another and finally swelled into the great Dal Khalsa. Even in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, almost the same mode of recruitment was largely followed so far as his irregular cavalry was concerned. The men joined the army not as individuals, but as a small band or group of men under the leadership of their local chief who would continue to act as 'company officer' even after the group had been incorporated in a particular *Derah*.

A *Misl*, therefore, like the company in a regiment, was a subordinate unit of a Derah, but there the resemblance ended. A *Misl*, for instance, had neither a fixed or uniform strength nor was it sub-divided into sections or squads. The strength of a *Misl* varied as much as from fifteen to seventy men, while in the case of very near members of the same family, such as brothers and cousins, even half a dozen men would sometimes form a *Misl*.

For purposes of administration and general control, the smaller *Derahs* were, in 1822, grouped into larger divisions, which were then placed under the charge of an officer of rank and distinction. Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia, the Sindhanwalia and the Attariwala Sardars, Misar Diwan Chand and Jamadar Khushhal Singh, each commanded a division, the Maharaja himself being generalissimo of the army.

This type of organization, it may be remarked, while recognizing the natural pride of the men to fight under the immediate command of their own leader, who was oftener than not, their own kinsman, and thus preserving the spirit of clannish union, did not deny to a *misldar* opportunities for learning such lessons of co-operation as unity of command so frequently offers.

Its Composition: A study of the names and sub-castes of troopers as given in the pay rolls leaves an impression on one's mind that almost all the military classes of the Punjab were represented in this branch of the army. The Jat Sikhs of the Central Doabs, the Hindu Rajputs of Jammu and Kangra hills, and the Mohammedan Rajputs

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occupying the present Shahpur, Jhelum, and Gujar Khan tracts probably supplied the largest proportion of recruits. The Pathans, the Khatris, and Datta Brahmins also appear in the army lists, but the Rajputs and the Jat Sikhs easily formed the predominant element.

There is also one other interesting point that deserves to be mentioned in connection with the composition of the irregular cavalry. Each subordinate group or *misl* was, as a matter of course, composed of members of one caste or clan, and in the event of a vacancy taking place no pains were spared to maintain the purity of the group, by inducing, if possible, a relation of the deceased or the retiring incumbent to enlist.

Ghorcharah Fauj – its Strength: The pay and emoluments of the irregular cavalry were comparatively higher than those of the members of the regular army. In the beginning, the Maharaja, following the old traditional practice, paid these men in *Jagirs* to the value of *rupees* four to six hundred a year, the regiment of *Ghorcharah Khas*, the Jamwal Rajputs, and a portion of the regiment of orderlies being so paid. But gradually, as the numbers increased and the practice of cash payments became more common, the starting salary of a trooper ranged between rupees two hundred and fifty and three hundred a year. It may be remembered in this connection, that the recruit was supposed, at any rate so far as the state was concerned, to furnish his own horse and bring his own arms and armour. This was in accordance with the time-honoured practice of the old Khalsa Cavalry, when any youth who possessed a horse and a sword could get himself enrolled under the banner of a chief. In actual practice, however, this rule was not very strictly observed. The recruit was given every facility by the State, and in case he could not provide his own horse and accoutrements, at the time of entering service, he was provided with the necessary equipment by the Government or sometimes by the chief in whose company he took service, and was allowed to make good the cost by easy instalments. The usual rates under the head of deductions were rupees one hundred for the horse, rupees sixteen to twenty for a matchlock, and rupees ten for a sword.

Table showing the strength and annual salary expenditure of their regular cavalry:-

Year	Strength	Annual Salary.
1870 (1813 A.D.)	374	Rs. 1,65,117
1874 (1817 A.D)	2,464	Rs. 2,78,318
1876 (1819 A.D.)	3,577	Rs. 11,13,782
1880 (1823 A.D)	7,300	Rs. 22,45,000
1885 (1828 A.D.)	7,200	Rs. 21,94,000
1895 (1838 A.D.)	10,795	Rs. 31,68,714
1900 (1843 A.D.)	14,388	Rs. 44,18,840

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1902 (1845 A.D.)	19,100	Rs. 58,27,597

Jagirdari Fauj: In the years that followed, Ranjit Singh found the system of *jagirs* in juxtaposition to cash payments becoming almost a problem. As we know, the practice of granting *jagirs* had been entirely abolished, so we might as well dwell awhile in studying this time honoured custom. A fairly large proposition of the State revenues was absorbed by these military chiefs and other *jagirs* granted to his principal *Sardars* and courtiers.[9] The number of men which these chieftains were expected to bring into the field amounted, at one time, to as much as twenty thousand well-equipped horsemen.

The *Jagirdari* cavalry was thus raised on the feudal principle, the grantee of a fief undertaking to furnish a certain number of efficient and well-equipped troopers whenever required by the State. The number of horses raised by each of the chiefs was, of course, chiefly determined by the value of their respective *jagirs*.

Ordinarily, these chiefs and their men were permitted to live on their own *jagirs*. They were required to present themselves for a review of their troops once in a year on the Dussehra festival when a general parade of the entire army was held either at Lahore or Amritsar. On such occasions, a strict muster of these troops was taken by the Maharaja in person, and the presence of every man from the highest officer down to the ordinary soldier was made obligatory. With a view to enforcing attendance on all, high and low at the annual inspections, and to reduce to the minimum the number of absentees, strict rules were laid down for the punishment of recalcitrants.

Further to guard against corruption and cheating with the consequent weakening of an important arm of his military service, the Maharaja took effective measures to exercise a strict check and control over the retainers of his chiefs as well as their steeds. The terms of the grant of *jagirs* were so revised that, in addition to undertaking the maintenance of the stipulated number of well-equipped troopers, a grantee was also required to deposit in the archives of the State a descriptive roll of all the members of his contingent. At the time of annual inspections or when the contingents were called out for an expedition, the descriptive rolls were minutely examined with reference to the men actually produced for service and serious notice was taken of any discrepancies that were discovered. As regards their mounts, the practice of branding the horses of the retainers was introduced.

It may be pointed out in this connection that a breach these rules was seldom allowed to go unpunished. Cases are not wanting where even the highest military officers who failed to fulfill the conditions of grant suffered punishment. Even Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa – a great General of Ranjit Singh,was, on one occasion, fined a sum of two *lacs* of *rupees* for not maintaining the stipulated number of men.

Jagirdari Fauj – Its Strength: The number of Ranjit Singh's feudal horses cannot

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be accurately ascertained from the available records. The descriptive rolls of the army are not complete, whereas the record relating to the pay-rolls could not possibly have included the lists of the *Jagirdari* troops, as the management of these troops was left entirely to the chiefs themselves. The compilation of such a list from the revenue papers relating to the annual grant of *Jagirs* is a huge and complicated task requiring a long and patient search.

Superior Social State: Recruited and officered, as it was, mainly from amongst the relations and followers of the once independent chiefs, the *Ghorcharah* army represented the better class of society. As such, it had a peculiar charm and attraction for the Sikh peasants, and it was not so much for a slightly higher pay that a man joined the *Ghorcharah* ranks as for the dignity attaching to this branch of the army.

The proud bearing of a *Ghorcharah* – when riding his noble steed with his long, tapering bamboo lance bending in the air and his silver-bossed shield rattling against his sword and pistol – won for him the admiration of every one who saw him. Baron Hugel, a Prussian traveller, who visited Ranjit Singh's court in 1836, describes this cavalry in the following terms:

> "I requested leave to inspect them (the *Ghorcharahs*) and never beheld a finer nor a more remarkably striking body of men. Each one was dressed differently, and yet so much in the same fashion that they all looked in perfect keeping. The handsome Raja Suchet Singh (commander of one of the biggest divisions) was in a similar costume, and reminded me or the time when the fate of empires hung on the point of a lance, and when the individual whose bold heart beat fearlessly under his steel breastplate was the sole founder of his fortunes. The strange troop before me was peculiarly Indian. The uniform consisted of a velvet coat or gabardine, over which most of them wore a shirt of mail others had this shirt made to form a part of the tunic. A belt round the waist, richly embroidered in gold, supported the power-horn, covered with cloth of gold, as well as the Persian batar and the pistol which many of them carried in addition to those weapons. Some wore a steel helmet, inlaid with gold, and surmounted with ....or black heron's plume: others wore a cap of steel, worked like a cuirass in rings. The left arm is often covered from hand to the elbow with a steel cuff inlaid with gold. The round Sikh shield hangs on the back fastened with straps across the chest, a quiver at the right side and a bow slung at the back being carried as part of the equipment, a bag made in the belt holds the balls, and a tail bayonet, frequently ornamented with gold held in the right hand when the man is on foot and carried over the shoulder when in the saddle, completes the dress."[10]

Drill, Discipline and Code of Punishment.- As drill and discipline has been observed more than once in these pages. Ranjit Singh's one concern was to raise the efficiency of his infantry and artillery. During the earlier years of the introduction of these arms in his military service, Maharaja had set apart his morning hours to inspect the drill of his forces when he would often distribute gifts of money and other presents to those with whose work he was really pleased. His standing orders to the officers

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concerned were that they should regularly inspect the drill of their men. The Sikhs acquired considerable efficiency in European tactics of warfare. W.G. Osborne, Military Secretary to the Government of India, who had occasion to see the Sikh troops on parade in June 1838 writes as follows:

> "Agreeably to invitation, we repaired this morning (1St June, 1838) to meet the Maharaja and see some of his regular infantry upon their parade. We found about 2,000 men under arms and some foot artillery. They are a fine looking body of men, dressed in white... jackets and trousers with black belts and pouches, and wear the yellow Sikh turban. They submit willingly to the same discipline and regulations as our own sepoys...but have a prejudice against wearing a cap or shako and previous to their enlistment make and agreement that they shall not be required to do so or to shave.
>
> "They work in three ranks and do everything by beat of drum according to the French fashion, are not what is called well set up, but beautifully steady on parade and fire with greater precision an regularity, both volleys and file firing, than any other body of troops I ever saw."

Form of Punishment: The forms of punishment awarded for various kinds of offences such as, insubordination breach of discipline, neglect of duty, etc, which one comes across recorded in official papers of the Sikh Government are: (i) Dalel or extra drill duty; (ii) fine; (iii) reduction in pay or rank; (iv) imprisonment; (v) kath-marna (stocks); (vi) mutilation of limb or organ, (vii) fancy punishments, such as, blackening the face of the culprit and parading him round the town, stamping and branding the forehead and exile from his native town (*baran pathron bahir*).

The usual punishment for an ordinary breach of discipline was the inflation of a small fine. It was however, not an uncommon thing for a sentence of imprisonment for a serious offence to be finally commuted into one of fine. A serious neglect of duty, for instance, the absence of a sentinel from his post at night (*pahra*) was punished by reduction in rank or the imposition of fine or by both.

Absence of Capital Punishment: In this connection, it is noteworthy, that the penalty of death is conspicuous by it's absence in the Sikh military code. 'We punish but we will not take life,' are significant words which have been put in the mouth of Ranjit Singh by a contemporary English writer in his book *The Adventurer*. This view is also supported by two incidents mentioned by Dr. Honighberger in his book, *Thirty five years in the East*. He writes:

> "Genearl Allard told me the Maharaja once reprimanded him (Avitabile for having executed some Mussalmans whom General Avitabile had ordered to be hung because they were of opinion, that, under the protection of a European Governor (Avitabile was appointed Governor of Wazirabad), they might be at liberty to eat beef. The opinion of Ranjit Singh was that he ought to have imprisoned the criminals and then allowed them to escape."

Again on another page he mentions the case of a Nihang (Akali) Sikh who wanted

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to force his way into the Maharaja's camp and being stopped by the sentinel on duty had struck him with sword and cut off his arm. In the opinion of Doctor Honighberger 'such an offender deserved gallows', but the culprit was punished by the Maharaja with the loss of his ear, nose or hands with the same sabre with which he had so skillfully cut off the arm of the soldier on royal duty.

Trial by Ordeal: There is an interesting case on record which shows that the trial by ordeal was not quite unknown. Unfortunately, the file of the case is incomplete and it is difficult to find out the nature of the offence, but the summary decision and the punishment awarded to the guilty may not be without interest. The paper bears the heading *infisali muqadama qaidiyan paltan La Font farangi*, i.e., the award in individual cases of the undertrial prisoners of the battalion under La Font.' Out of the fourteen men who were tried, nine were dismissed (*bar tarf shudand*9), three were imprisoned or sent to the lock-up again (*qaid ba dastur mandah*, 3), one man named Kahan Singh was punished with the loss of an ear; he was, besides, branded on the forehead and dismissed from service, while the remaining one, Jamiat Singh, proved his innocence by plunging his hand into boiling oil which sustained no injury, was not only not punished and allowed to join his regiment but was promoted to the rank of a Naik.

VI

Pensions, Rewards and Distinctions

Pensions: There does not seem to have been an definite age limit either for entering the *Maharaja's* service or for compulsory retirement. So long as a man was considered to be physically fit for active duty, he continued to serve in the army. There are cases on record where men of sixty and even beyond are borne on the army pay rolls. Nor do we come across any manual or rules and orders governing the grant of pensions to the retiring, wounded or invalid soldiers of Ranjit Singh's army. But, from a number of recorded cases it is apparent that some kind of allowance was granted to those permanently disabled for active service and, at times, provision was also made for the dependents of the soldier who died on active duty. This allowance is noticed, under two different names, i.e., *dharmarth* and *ingis*. *Dharmarth* literally means charity, and the origin and introduction of the word *ingis* I have not been able to trace. That this word denotes a sort of government allowance or pension is a fact and is still current in the rural areas of the Punjab. It may be that the practice of granting allowance to the disabled soldiers was borrowed from the English East India Company's troops and, as such, the term is only a Punjabised form of the word 'English'.[11]

Rewards: Ranjit Singh like all other great men had the gift of selecting right men for right situations. And he further understood and realized the principle too well that

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the award of a gift or the conferment of an honour or distinction for a meritorious service would not only be the recipient for the particular occasion but will serve as an incentive to further loyal and faithful work. The *Toshakhana* papers of Ranjit Singh's Government as well as the court chronicles written by the official historian Sohan Lal, abound with references to the grant of *Khila'at* for distinguished services to the government by civil and military officers. The value and grade of a *Khila'at* was judged by the number, variety and quality of the pieces of garments comprising it. As a rule, an eleven-piece *Khila'at* was regarded as of the first class and was given to high officials, although I have come across instances where a *Khila'at* comprising fifteen and even twenty-two pieces together with jeweled ornaments and richly caparisoned animals like an elephant or a horse was also bestowed upon distinguished guests visiting the Darbar of the Maharaja.

The importatnt garments included in a *Khila'at* were: (i) *doshala* (Kashmir shawl); (ii) a piece of *Kimkhwab* (brocade); (iii) a *dupatta* (scarf); (iv) *dastar* (turban); (v) pieces of *gulbadan* (a kind of striped silk cloth) (vi) a *rumal* (kerchief); (vii) *jamawar* (a kind of shawl cloth for a chogha or long coat); (viii) a *kamarband* (waisthand).

Of the jeweled weapons and ornaments that often formed part of a *Khila'at* the following may specially be mentioned: (i) *kara* (gold bracelet); (ii) *kantha* (gold necklace (iii) *kangan* (gold bangles); (iv) mala marvarid (a gold chain-set with pearls); (v) bazuband (gold armlet), (vi) *Kalghi* (aigrette); (vii) *jigha* (a turban ornament): (viii) *Sarpech* (also a turban ornament); (ix) shamsher murass's (sword with its handle inlaid with gold): (x) *kard* (a dagger with ornamented handle); (xi) *tabr* (a sort of battle-axe), tarkash (ornamented quiver for arrows). It may also be mentioned in this connection, that following the court etiquette and ceremonial of the Mughals, Ranjit Singh also introduced the practice of bestowing elephants, *Palki* or *Pinas* (palanquins and *Nagarah* (kettle-drum) upon officials of very high rank as a mark of special favour. Such grants were, in fact looked upon as a special privilege and a mark of the recipient's high social or official position and were wholly or partially resumed by the state whenever the official was brought under disgrace.

Titles: Like the Mughals again, Maharaja Ranjit Singh adopted a fairly elaborate system of granting titles to deserving officials. The titles were, of course, suited to the profession, life and conduct of the man. The titles granted to military men were necessarily different from those bestowed upon persons of the military titles were: *Hiebar-Jang* (the lion in fight), *Zafar-Jang* (victorious in war), *Samsam-ul-daulah* (Sharp sword of the State), *Shujah-ud-daulah* (valour of the State), *Tahawur-panah* (asylum of bravery), etc.

If the military titles referred to qualities of bravery and courage, those of the civil department praise honesty, sagacity and industry; such as *Dayanat panah* (abode

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of honesty), *Firasat-dastgah* (sagacious), *Mashakhat panch* (refuge of greatness), etc. Similarly, ecclesiastical titles were based on qualities of spirituality, nobility of life and conduct, etc. For instance, the most important of those were: *brahm-murat* (image of divinity), ujjal didar (of bright looks), *nirmal-budh* (of pure intelligence), etc.

The titles of Diwan and Raja, it appears, were sparingly bestowed and were, perhaps, regarded as the highest titles given on the civil side.

The titles of *Sardar* both for military and civil officers was considered one of considerable distinction and was almost always conferred upon Sikhs. Some of the greatest Sikh generals of Ranjit Singh's forces like Hari Singh Nalwa, Gurmukh Singh Lamba, Dal Singh Naherna, etc., never got anything more than this title or *izaz-i-sardari*, as it was called. If at all, a couple of Persian or Hindi words expressive of a Sardar's exalted dignity or position were prefixed to this title, by way of *alqab*, in official correspondence, such as, *ba-viqar azimulshan*, *ali-iqtidar*, etc.

Order[12] of Merit or Star of the Punjab: About two years before his death, or more exactly on the occasion of the marriage of his grandson, Prince Nau Nihal Singh (March 1837), Maharaja Ranjit Singh instituted an order of Merit after the fashion of western nations. The title of the order was *Kaukab-i-Iqbal-i-Punjab* (Star of the Prosperity of the Punjab), and the Grand Master of the Order was Prince Nau Nihal Singh. It was represented by a large gold medal of three different classes depending upon the nature of the precious stones with which they were ornamented. These three classes corresponded to the three grades of the order which they represented. The following is a brief description of the three classes of the medals (*taghma*). It may be mentioned, at once, that all the three bore an effigy (*pratima*) of Ranjit Singh in bust in the centre on one side, while on the other side the names of the Maharaja was artistically engraved in the *minakari* work. The medals were provided with a silk riband of gold and scarlet colour (*Surkh-o-Zard*), and the recipients were expected to wear them round their neck (*dar gulu awezan khwahand bud*), so that the medal itself rested on the breast of the wearer. As the name indicates, all the three medals were in the shape of a star with ten rays radiating from the centre. Five of these rays were longer and other five somewhat smaller, and long and short rays alternated. The size of the medals of the first and second class was the same, measuring 2¼ inches (*yak girah*) along the largest diameter. I have not been able to come across, but I presume all the three medals were of equal size, the difference in the value and importance of the three medals being, as I have mentioned above, in the number and character of the precious stones set in them.

Medal of the First Class was ornamented with a diamond (*Marrasa ba almas*). Medals of the Second Class had two precious stones set in it, namely a diamond and an emerald (*almas-o-zumurrud*). Presumably, these were smaller stones than the single

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set in a medal of the First Class. Medal of the Third Class contained a single emerald set in it without any other kind of stone.

The admission to Order of the First Grade was limited to the members of the family of the Maharaja, and a small number of distinguished chiefs and noblemen who had given proof of their devotion and fidelity to the person of the Maharaja and his House. Order of the Second Grade was bestowed upon loyal courtiers, notable Sardars, governors of the army and ambassadors or very high officials in political service. The Order of the Third Grade was open to (a) military officers of the rank of colonel, major or captain who had earned distinction for bravery, resourcefulness, alertness and faithfulness; (b) civil servants distinguished for ability and honesty, and (c) other persons enjoying confidence and worthy of greater confidence and honour.

It is worth mentioning that the admission to the Order was accompanied by an award of a title as well as an appropriate *Khila'at.* Thus, an Order of the first grade was accompanied by the award of the title of the Raja and a Khila'at comprising a sword, a shield, a pair of gold bracelets, a golden chain set with pearls (mala-mawarid) and a *sarpech* for the turban. Similarly, admission to the second grade carried with it the title of Sardar together with a *Khila'at* consisting of a sword, a shield, and a pair of gold bracelets, while the title of Bahadur and*Khila'at* of a sword and a pair of gold bracelets were bestowed upon persons of the last grade of the order.

Sita Ram Kohli

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References

1. In what manner and on what lines Ranjit Singh remodeled his army has been described at some length by the present writer in a number of articles contributed to the Journal of Indian History, Madras, between 1922 and 1936.
2. The pay rolls of Ranjit Singh's army (1811-1849) are preserved intact in the archives of the Punjab Government and were arranged and catalogued by me in 1918-19 - S.R.K.
3. It should be borne in mind that the Maharaja had made all his important conquests before 1822, when the European officer joined his service.
4. It will be noticed that the estimated strength of combatants is 576 men @ 4447 per mensem, whereas the actual strength of the battalion was 560 men @ 4279 per mensem.
5. Ranjit Singh also gave stipends to his countrymen to acquire what little practical knowledge was available in India in those days. One of these men was Mian Qadir Bakhsh - Grandfather of the late Mr Justice Shah Din - whom the Maharaja had sent to Ludhiana. On his return home he wrote a work in Persian on Gunnery entitled *Miftah-ul-Qila.*
6. Jean Francois Allard joined the service of the Maharaja along with his friend and companion-in-arms, General Ventura, early in March 1822. Ventura received the command of a body of infantry
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and Allard was commissioned to raise a corps of dragoons, who were to be disciplined and armed exactly on the same lines as a cavalry corps in Europe. Both were given liberal salaries of about Rs 30,000 each per annum. To General Ventura, the Maharaja assigned for his residence the remarkable building known as the tomb of Anarkali, while an equally fine and commodious building was allotted to Allard. Between and near the residence of these officers, which were at a distiance of about one mile from the city proper were built military barracks together with a bazaar where provisions for the soldiers were sold (known as risalah bazaar). Outside the room used by the Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, there stands a marble tablet with the words 'Jean Baptiste Ventura, General in the Service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, erected this building in its original form and lived in it for many years. It became the British Residency in 1847, and was occupied by Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence as Residents in the Court of Lahore, and after annexation of the Punjab, as members of the Board of Administration. The building - or rather the site of it, as the old building was demolished in 1915 - occupied by General Allard is known as the Kapurthala House as later on it was acquired by His Highness the Maharaja of Kapurthala. By the common people, however, it is called Kuri Bagh as it contains the tomb of the daughter of General Allard. The building is occupied at the present moment by the Fateh Chand College for Women.

7. A Brief history of the various derah or regimental camps composing the *Ghorcharah Fauj* given in my Catalogue of the Khalsa Darbar Records, Vol 1, pp. 109-10.
8. Since these Derahs were subsequently placed, for purposes of administration, under one or the other Chief of rank and position, the Vakil acted as the agent of the chief at the Court.
9. Out of an income of nearly Rs. 3,00,00,000 about Rs. 75,00,000 was granted as jagir for military and other services.
10. Baron Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab*, translated by Major T.B. Jervis, FRS, London, 1845, p. 231.
11. For a fuller treatment of the Subject of pensions see my article no IV on the Army of Ranjit Singh in the *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. V.
12. The order and the Medal which was the insignia of the order have all the appearance of being largely instituted after the style of the Legion de Honour instituted by Napolean Bonaparte in 1802. Even some of the phraseology used in describing the order appears to have been taken from the French Original.

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RANJIT SINGH'S HISTORIOGRAPHY – EARLY AND COLONIAL PHASE –

I

Historiography is both the writing of history and an understanding of the written history. History is an enquiry into the past whereas Historiography is a review of the enquiry as well as the enquirer. Historian is known by the kind of Historiography he invokes to draw the past. In modern philosophy of History, Historian is also taken as a medium of happenings. The significance of a person, event, idea and system is determined by the kind of its recording in memory or practice. It is true about the History and Historiography of Ranjit Singh also. The great Sikh sovereign was a rich subject for Historians; himself a keen observer of men and events,[1] Ranjit Singh was deeply observed by the others. He was drawn or sketched but not by the word alone.

Like the Delhi rulers (1206-1739) and the Calcutta establishment (1765-1858) the House of Sukerchakyia was concerned with its own record. Charhat Singh and Maha Singh had employed Ganpat Suri for this job. So did Ranjit Singh. First, Ganpat continued to serve him. On his death, his son, Sohan Lal took the charge. The two Suris produced the celebrated *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*.[2] The work on the *twarikh* began under Charhat Singh (1771) and ended with the Punjab annexation. Its divisions or Daftars, five in number, focus our attention upon the chronology of Punjab history. In fact, the *Daftars* fix an outline of this chronology for us.

The very fact that the *twarikh* was the work of more than one ruler and more than one scribe lends a history to it. This history of the work shows that the Sukerchakia concern with Historiography was important one, though it may be least comparable to that the one shown by the British. For one thing, the *twarikh* continued to grow. Its development under Sohan Lal since 1812 needs a brief.

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Beginning as a kind of Diary and family-history, the *twarikh* recorded selective episodes related to the Sukerchakyia. The episodes were presented in the fashion of heroic and mythical tales intended to show more the wisdom of the Age in general and the intelligence of the scribe than the details of the event. Ganpat wrote his account upto 1812 A.D., when his son and successor with the ruler of Lahore took over its charge. He was the well-known Sohan Lal Suri.

It was only under Sohan Lal Suri that the *twarikh* emerged as the court chronicle. As the century rolled on, his work became more and more an account of the military and administrative activities of Ranjit Singh. Focus upon his relationship with the other powers, especially, the British was yet another feature it had acquired by the times of William Bentinck (1828-35). Changing nature of the work was only an indication of the growing authority of Sohan Lal under his patrons. From a Diarist, he rose to become chronicler and translator from English into Persian. By 1831, he was in touch with Wade, the company's agent at Ludhiana.[3] The Maharaja knew it well and did not discourage.

Historiography of Ranjit Singh began with the *Umdat-ut-twarikh*. True that the work was in Persian. Should we call it on the basis of its language a piece of 'Persian Historiography'? Again, it is a fact that it has been treated as such. But it begs the question because a recent work on Sikh history *From the Persian Sources* does not cover the *twarikh*.[4] Surely, the *twarikh* is 'Persian Historiography' but with a difference. It is also a 'Sikh' source, though equally acceptable to the British as well. Growing in the colonial set up, the *Umdat-ut-twarikh* is both an indigenous and western work.

That the Persian writing emanating from Lahore by the end of the first decade of 19th century had an orientation of its own; and that it was an orientation directed to and by diplomacy and intelligence, had been amply demonstrated by another couple of works. This is reference to *Ahwal-i-Firqa-i-Sikhan*[5], and *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh 1810-17*.[6]

The *Ahwal* was compiled by the *Vaqanavis* and *Vakil* Khushwaqt Rai. The man had the opportunity of serving both the Maharaja and the Company. It dealt with numerous Sikh chiefs in their political relationship with one another in the past till 1811, i.e., the time of its compilation. One third of the *Ahwal* was, however, devoted to the Sukerchakyia.[7] It was a tribute to their rise under Ranjit Singh. And the key to this rise was, for Khushwaqt Rai, the personalities and actions of Charhat Singh and Maha Singh.

In the meantime, the regular supply of 'news' from the Deori of Ranjit Singh in Lahore had begun to Poona and the beyond. These news-sheets, as collected till date, began in 1810 and lasted in the main up to 1817.[8] Their English translators rightly named the collection as '*Persian Intelligence*'.[9] Incidentally, they also reveal something

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about the organization of Sikh studies on Ranjit Singh in the 20th century.

We are told that before the arrival, translation and compilation of these news-sheets from Poona at the Punjab Record office in 1932-33 the archives on Ranjit Singh were dominated by the documents in English language.[10] As a result, the information on Ranjit Singh's life and times during his last thirty years was 'more complete' than that related to his first thirty years, wrote Garrett and Chopra. In this way, our translators found history of the Maharaja divided into two periods – the early from 1780 to 1810 and the later from 1810 to June 1839. They were sure that the news-sheets would help knowing more about the early phase of his history. Here, 'Persian Historiography' obviously meant 'early' Historiography. One should not go strictly by this demarcation because it reduces, consciously or unconsciously, the relevance of Persian record for the later part of his life.

Be as it may, Garett and Chopra wrote it clearly that the author of the Events was a very well informed, trained and influential functionary in the kingdom.[11] With his sources of information inside Lahore and outside it, he could certainly not be an obscure or concealed *Vaqanavis*. Well-coordinated network and its existence might not be ruled out.

At the moment, there is nothing to suggest a direct link between Khushwaqt Rai, Sohan Lal Suri and the author of the *Events*. However, one thing is noticeable. Khushwaqt Rai closed his account by the year 1811. Sohan Lal began from 1812. Moreover, all the three writers in Persian were concerned mainly with the military and political affairs of the Sikh chiefs. For this very reason, they had insignificant interest in Sikh movement or Sikh history as such. A kind of reductionism was at work. The *Events* were exclusively related to Ranjit Singh and his day-to-day working. The *Ahwal* was mainly the story of the Sukherhakyia. Sohan Lal Suri emerged as the chronicler of Ranjit Singh. On the whole, Persian Historiography meant '*Vaqa*' in the first instance. Secondly, it meant 'news' from Lahore and its Ruler. Thirdly, it was an oral history. Lastly, it was too much contemporary. The causation of failure or success of Ranjit Singh's any enterprise in any sphere was not its concern. It was an historical Historiography. In the final run, it made Ranjit Singh the only centre of Sikh power and its radiance. A step more and there was the British Historiography that would treat the Maharaja with or without his family as the beginning and end of Sikh polity.

We conclude this discussion of 'Persian Historiography' by observing its popularity with the company and its Agents. Consider for a moment how was produced *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with an Account of the Religion, Laws and Customs of the Sikhs.*[12] Henry T. Prinsep, a Secretary with Government compiled it from the two Narratives – one each made by Wade (the Ludhiana Agent) and Murray (the Ambala Agent). Both the Agents had been directed

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to gather information, they made elaborate 'enquiries'. Indians were asked to submit their accounts orally. Some of them were induced to send their information in writing also. Two of the Indians were particularly found useful. One was Sohan Lal Suri 'the Hindu'. Second was Bute Shah 'the Mohammadan'. How were the other Indians? It is difficult to say at the moment. It was the Narrative prepared at Ambala by Murray that was preferred and it was 'corrected' through foot-notes by Prinsep. Obviously, the Secretary used, here and there, Wade's Narrative also. *Origin of the Sikh Power* contained its compiler's own 'intelligence' also. It came out in 1834.

Cunningham called that 1834 publication as "Murray's Ranjit Singh"[13] to show not only the important role played by Murray in its making but also to highlight its subject - Ranjit Singh - and his importance. Also, he felt that Murray's work was based on 'oral collections'.[14] Prinsep's book, disclosed Cunningham, hardly used any 'English document' though such documents were available in abundance since 1803.

It is a known fact that both Bute Shah and Suri wrote 'Persian Histories'. These 'histories' were consulted by the British and used by their diplomats to enrich their understanding to enhance their intelligence. By preferring Murray's work, the British were preferring and propping up a Historiography that was 'Persian' by method even if written in English or Gurumukhi - Gurumukhi because we know that an important work on Sikh History in it came out in 1844.[15] This work was rooted in Murray's curiosity, and its author, Rattan Singh Bhangu's desire to broadcast Sikhism – both as religion and past polity – to the world through the British Empire. Obviously, the British enquiries beginning with Wade and Murray did not stop at 1834. Any way, the British Historiography of the Sikhs, going by Prinsep's work, reared itself upon the Persian Historiography. Prinsep's book suffered in two prominent features of the Persian Historiography, namely, (1) grounding in orality (2) concern with 'actions' of Ranjit Singh.[16]

II

Murray, Wade and Prinsep observed some of the results of Ranjit Singh's actions. These were related to his character, military resources, the revenues, and the general nature of polity or Government. The results comprised the last chapter of their work.[17] The book had an appendix on the customs and manners of the Sikhs. Prepared by Murray, the appendix intended to show 'the peculiarities of the Sikhs'. This claim was false in the sense that the 'peculiarities' noticed had nothing to do with Sikhism. In fact, the claim made through the title that the book also dealt with Sikh 'Religion' was hollow.

Ranjit was characterized as a man least produced or shaped by any kind of ideas or system of education except his own experience.[18] He could not read or write any

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language but did understand reports and representations made to him. He could see if his orders or instructions were written and communicated as he wanted them to be. He kept his secretaries always on their toes. His memory was excellent, disposition watchful, and the eye too sharp as to penetrate the mind of the others. All this enabled him to command all those who approached him and had ensured his rapid success.[19] Frank in conversation, he made his remarks or observations through terse, short and incoherent phrases. But these got fixed in the addressee's mind as if the words of 'an original thinker'.[20] But his frankness seldom leaked his 'design'. His wisdom never failed him because he was wonderfully fertile in resorting to expedients. No situation found him helpless or in darkness.

The Maharaja, continued Prinsep, had a great love for horse-riding and the display of his military splendour. Personally simple in dress and unreserved in all his habits, he took delight in military wade and show.[21] Always siezed with the military affairs, he spent 'half of every day in seeing reviews, or examining equipment, or in some way studying to promote the efficiency of some branch of his army.'[22] His courtiers and establishments were decorated in jewels and handsome dresses. They showed considerable taste, and his Darbar 'is very striking.'[23]

For Prinsep, Ranjit Singh was 'no bigot' for he had been active in restraining the zeal and fanaticism of the Akalis and 'others.'[24] Yet the Maharaja observed 'all the prescribed observances of Sikh faith.'[25] Every day for a certain number of hours, 'he had the *Granth* read before him.'[26] He was liberal in his charities to the *faqirs*.

No political philosophy underlined his acts. Nor was he the harbinger of a political system or 'principle in management'. His military-men were in control of the lives and properties of producing classes – the farmers and traders. But his extortions were 'directed chiefly against old Sikh families and his own state officers'.[27] Traders and merchants were relatively better protected.

Prinsep noted the Maharaja's failure to give any constitution, system of Government, Law - written or oral – and court of justice to Punjab.[28] So much so that the Sikh institutions of 18th century such as *Gurmatta* were 'entirely discontinued'.[29] The last *Gurmatta* was held in 1805 when Ranjit Singh had yet no pretension to be the sole sovereign of the Sikhs.[30] Prinsep saw his Government as 'pure despotism' based upon a standing army ready to serve him. Plunder and exaction were included in this 'service'. Ranjit Singh's political-administrative control was exercised partly through the army and partly through his 'personal influence.'[31] In fact, the whole power and authority was centred in an individual. For this very reason, its continuation was doubtful because his son and probable successor, Kharak Singh, was a different character,[32] wrote he.

Nevertheless, the Maharaja was a great founder. He raised an excellent army and

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created a kingdom rich in revenue. He was like 'the first Peter of Russia'.[33] Also, he was a genius produced by his society, caste, class and history. Prinsep identified the unfavourable social and historical circumstances of Ranjit Singh and suggested that some of them might be changed for good by the nature of his court. He wrote:

All that was educated, and refined, had disappeared from the Punjab when Ranjit Singh was born. The natural effect, however, of the union of authority in his person, has been, to create a court, where, in the course of time, science and refinement will be produced, or collected from the countries around, as the habits of peace and luxury, come to supercede the bustle, and perpetual activity of war and military expeditions.[34]

In one important field Ranjit Singh had already overcome some of his adverse political circumstances, wrote he. He had successfully met the challenge of the British on one side and, on the other side, had faced 'prejudiced and fanatic musalman population of Afghanistan upon every other frontier.'[35] The brave and the bigoted Muslims within these frontiers stood reconciled 'to the sway of a hated, and even despised sect,'[36] This reconciliation was among 'the most creditable features of the policy and career of Ranjit Singh,'[37]

III

In continuation of the British enquiries in the Sikh polity, nay, the affairs of the Sikh states particularly the Lahore Kingdom, J. D. Cunningham wrote a Narrative in 1846 for the enlightenment of Governor-General. This Narrative comprised two and a half chapters of his *History of the Sikhs*. From the middle of chapter five to the end of its chapter seven, the History relied on the Narrative of 1846.[38] The Narrative and also History had, we are told, a distinct characteristic in that Cunningham consciously departed from Murray and Wade's practice of preferring oral and Persian sources over the British or official documents in English language. He felt the English documents expressed better the opinion of the times and gave thereby a more complete picture of the events. Having a desire to write a general history of the Sikhs, Cunningham found the works of Suri and Bute Shah as 'the best available.' Prinsep's work he used extensively.

Prinsep and Murray's work had raised the question of the peculiarities of the Sikhs as a 'nation'. However, they had miserably failed to relate them to Sikhism, both as religion and polity. Murray described the social, cultural and public practice of the Sikh population as he found it through his interaction with the Sikh states.[39] Jat customs and manners found the major space with him.

The concern felt and the issues raised by the British through Murray were responded by Rattan Singh Bhangu (1844) and J. D. Cunningham (1846, 1849). Both were concerned with Sikh ideas and institutions and their past and future. Both chose to go

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beyond Murray and Bute Shah but acknowledged the significance of British rule for the future of Sikhism. Yet the difference between Bhangu and Cunningham was there.

The *Prachin Panth Prakash* did not deal with Ranjit Singh or the other Sikh chiefs of the 19th century. Cunningham wrote on the history of Punjab taking it as the history of the Sikh rise right from Guru Nanak to the Battles on the Satluj. Bhangu stressed the role of Amritsar and the Singhs of Majha in the making of Sikh movement.[40] Cunningham underlined the importance of ideas of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and their successful execution by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Cunningham virtually made the Sikh ruler of Lahore as the third most important leader of Sikh movement, the first two being Guru Nanak and the tenth Master.[41]

History of the Sikhs devoted more than two chapters to Ranjit Singh. It reminded the world as to what Forster had written about the Sikh Punjab. His remark that the Sikhs had erected a strong wall of 'Religion' in Punjab against Abdali found great favour with Cunningham.[42] The key to Sikh progress from a 'sect' to a 'nation' under Ranjit Singh was Sikhism, maintained he.

Cunningham was so much impressed with the achievements of Ranjit Singh that he showed no sympathy or regret with the dissolution of Sikh *Misls*. By establishing a grand military and glorious monarchy, Ranjit Singh gave the Khalsa a larger political national version.[43] Also, his war machine was a great opportunity for the peasant and the mechanic who could and did enter both Religion and Politics only by joining it. Ranjit Singh's was a popular monarchy as it ended the domination of feudal military lords operating in the name of Khalsa but actually fighting for their petty political ends. In the post-Abdali period the genuine spirit of Sikhism once again took shelter in the dwelling of the peasant to be retrieved only by Ranjit Singh's army,[44] wrote Cunningham. In this sense, Ranjit Singh's polity or despotism was something more than militarism. It was a renewal of the Khalsa. Cunningham told the British that Sikhs were better soldiers than Rajputs, Pathans, Marathas and even the Gurkhas. It was not because the training they had under the French and the Italians.[45] Unlike the other four fighting communities, the Sikhs had their distinct ideas and hopes to sustain their fighting capacity. The Sikh had an open mind making him responsive to new ideas or 'impressions'. He was quick to pick up things useful. He was prone to progress, and was not 'indifferent' to the political advancement of his 'race'. Lastly, his faith was "ever present to sustain him under any adversity, and to assure him an ultimate triumph."[46]

On the whole, Cunningham refused to go by the myth that Generals Ventura and Court were the creators of Sikh army. They came in 1822. Already, the Sikhs were known for 'their ardent courage, the alert obedience and the long endurance of fatigue'.[47] The Generals gave them the French words of command, the trebel ranks

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and the squares salient with guns. All that were what the foreigners could do, suggested Cunningham. Cunningham exploded another myth about the Maharaja and about the Sikh character in general. Even after Prinsep's work, the British observers like Osborne had continued to paint Ranjit Singh as a drunkard, debauch and man of sensuous pleasure. But Cunningham refused to take such impression as genuine or unique to the man and his 'nation'. The Moran episode did not make him believe that either Ranjit Singh or the Sikhs as a whole should be taken as 'lost to shame' or as 'revellers in every vice which disgraces humanity'.[48] The excesses of the Sikhs were exception. Nor could they afford it to be otherwise. Their hard military and civil life just did not permit that they could be without restraint. Moreover, it was wrong to judge them from a handful of their 'dissolate chiefs and licentious soldiers'.[49] How could thousands of peasants and industrious mechanics be woefully 'immoral', wondered Cunningham. The peasants of Punjab, like anywhere else, lived on their cake of millet or wheat and to draught of water from well. Liquor they took but only for occasional rejoicing, wrote he.

Cunningham fully recorded the circumstances of Ranjit Singh from the loss and regain of Jamraud in 1837 to the double invasion of Afghanistan under the Tripartite Treaty (June, 1838).[50] The year of 1837 brought both tears – death of Nalwa Sardar – and cheers – marriage of Naunihal Singh – to the aging Maharaja. The British decided to extend their politics through 'the schemes of peaceful trade and beneficial intercourse' with Sindh, Khorasan and the Punjab. Taking advantage of Ranjit Singh's circumstances, "the English interfered to embitter the short remaining years of his life, and to set bounds to his ambition on the west, as they had already done on the east and south."[51] The Governor-General proposed mediation over Peshawar. The mediation encouraged Dost Muhammad to seek an alliance with Persia and Russia,[52] The British move in no way led to reconciliation between the Sikhs and Afghans or among the Afghans themselves. It gave only a political role to the British.

Unable to domesticate Dost Muhammad, the British proposed in May 1838 to the Maharaja that they wanted Shah Shujah to be restored with the Sikh help. Ranjit Singh 'disliked the complete view of the scheme'[53] put to him by MacNaughten. "It chafed him that he was to resign all hopes of Shikarpur, and that he was to be enclosed within the iron-arms of the English rule.'[54] recorded Cunningham. The Maharaja hesitated but the British insisted. Through Mackson Ranjit Singh was served with an ultimatum that 'he would be left out if he did not choose to come in'.[55] Thus was made the Tripartite Treaty.

End of 1838 saw the crowding of British force at Ferozepur. Ranjit Singh and Lord Auckland met to open the Afghan campaign. The Sikh ruler was at the summit of his political ambition.[56] But his spirit touched its nadir. He found himself truly, in

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'Collision with the English'.[57] He became indifferent to his cares about the campaign. Physically he continued to sink.[58] The news of the fall of Kandhar was delayed to him. Cunningham implied that the Maharaja had no interest in the British success in Afghanistan. He died on 27th June, 1839, at the age of fifty nine, and before the capture of Ghazni and the occupation of Kabul.

IV

The heightened British concern with the Punjab by the thirties expressed itself through the vigorous diplomatic moves of the Bentinck regime (1828-35). In the name of commerce and civilization, the projects such as Indus Navigation scheme were designed to get involved the regions of Sindh and Punjab into the colonial undertakings. Soon, English education and religion – the Missions – were pressed into service. Non-English European courts also stepped in. Jacquemont's investigations and success with William Bentinck brought him to Lahore also.[59] He stayed in Punjab and visited Kashmir and Chamba at the Maharaja's expense. Ranjit Singh could not bring him to Ropar meeting with William Bentinck but the traveller proved more useful to the Maharaja by reporting him home – France – in very favourable terms. Ranjit Singh's popularity spread to Europe.

Locally, the French, Italian and other foreigners in the service of Lahore took upon themselves the task of improving the life in the kingdom by their changes and reforms in the military and civil spheres.[60] Generals Ventura and Court showed pretensions to original knowledge or scholarship in areas like Cartography, archaeology and drawing. The local artists were employed and encouraged. The British officers like Wade and Prinsep contacted them. Court's archaeological researches found their way to Prinsep in Calcutta. Prinsep's confidence expressed through his 1834 publication on Ranjit Singh that the Sikh court was capable of producing or collecting 'science and refinement' was based upon his personal knowledge of the innovations made by Court and Ventura.

With the Ropar conference between Bentinck and the Maharaja, the painting entered diplomacy of the two powers. Two painters from Lahore had accompanied Ranjit Singh.[61] The Governor-General had his own painter, Jiwan Ram of Delhi, with him. Jiwan Ram was lent to Ranjit Singh for some time. He sketched the Maharaja and visited Lahore. His sketch made the front piece of Prinsep's book (1834).[62]

The Ropar conference proved important in another way also. Bentinck had brought in special a contingent of the Lancers for show at Ropar. Ranjit Singh was attracted by the music band of the Lancers. Subsequently, Wade was approached to arrange good musicians 'for the Lahore court and army.[63] Interestingly, when Auckland met Ranjit Singh at Ferozepur (Nov, 1838) he was received in the Sikh camp by a Sikh

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Band playing 'our national anthem.'[64]

Bentinck's diplomacy and Prinsep's historiography made Ranjit Singh's 'character' and 'court' an important object of curiosity for the European adventurers and travellers. Those who visited the kingdom drew his likeness either by pen or by pencil and brush. More often the same person employed both these mediums, i.e., pen or written portraits and drawing. Cunningham noticed that Prinsep's characterization of Ranjit Singh as a person and ruler was 'the fullist.'[65]

Inspite of this, continued Cunningham, many descriptions of the Maharaja were made after 1834. He referred to the works of William Osborne and H.M. Lawrence. But he dismissed them by merely saying that these two 'contain many illustrative touches and anecdotes.'[66]

But Cunningham informs us that the only good picture of the Maharaja that had been published was the one taken by the Hon. Miss Eden. It, especially in the original drawing, was 'true and expressive.'[67] He did not make any big comments of his own upon the personality of Ranjit Singh save a brief one. That too he had to make because others had failed to observe it. It was the Maharaja's 'a broad and massive forehead' that marked his 'mental powers'. It was this mark 'which the ordinary portraits do not show'[68], wrote Cunningham.

Many descriptions of Ranjit Singh's 'person' and manners were drawn during the 1830's and the early forties. In addition to the works of Eden and Osborne, these included the creations of Vigne and Dr. Martin Honigberger.[69] Vigne was 'an itinerant geologist' who also wrote an autobiographical work entitled *A Personal Narrative.* He toured North India from 1832 to 1839. He made a sketch of Ranjit Singh that was much used by the Punjab artists.[70]

Dr Honigberger, an Austro-Hungarian Physician, was introduced to the Maharaja by his French Generals. He also kept a journal of his own which was published as *Thirty Five years in the East* in 1855. His memoirs are illustrated with engravings from miniature paintings. He was in touch with Ventura, Gardner and Imam Bakhsh Lahori. The last was a local artist patronized by General Court.

William Osborne and Miss Eden came to Punjab with Lord Auckland.[71] They painted Ranjit Singh when the British regime had already decided to politically intervene in the Punjab affairs, i.e., 1837-38. Osborne was the military Secretary to the Governor-General while Miss Eden was the sister of Auckland. The Miss was present at Ferozepur when Ranjit Singh and Auckland had met to launch the campaign against Dost Muhammad.[72] In the British camp at Ferozepur, she presented her sketch of Queen Victoria to the Sikh monarch. He took it with an equal show of reverence. She accompanied Auckland to both Amritsar and Lahore. Her last portrait of the Maharaja became the most popular. It showed him sitting firmly but serenely in an

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European chair facing the north-west.

Did the European artists of Ranjit Singh have any military or political motives? The answer may be in the positive in the case of Osborne. His twentieth century art historian[73] tell us that he was 'trained' to draw. While travelling through the Punjab he kept himself busy with pencil and sketch book. He viewed drawing 'as an amiable hobby – a means of whiling away his leisure hours and perhaps of importing information on his return.'[74] Further, his 'Diary' and 'Sketches' published as *The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh* "disclose how much he admired Sher Singh and it is not surprising that amongst the personages whom he sketched the future Maharaja was pre-eminent'?[75] In short, the painting was a political projection.

How the art and politics converged on 'information' becomes more clear in the Lahore career of General Court.[76] His association with French Legion is known. But he was equally expert in cartography and land-surveying. We are told he had given a well-prepared map of Kashmir to Jacquemont in 1831. The British were impressed with his popularity with the Sikh court, and more so with his wide trade network in that he had central Asia. Lastly, he had employed Imam Bhaksh who had an art-workshop in Lahore. While posted at Peshawar, Court ordered the Lahori to make paintings of the tribes of the valley so that he could rule them better. The painter was also sent in a two-member diplomatic mission to Dir or Kaffirstan *(chitrol* or *chitral)*. One member of the mission was to collect information, the second was to make drawings. We have already referred to Court's links with Prinsep.

The Maharaja continued to be painted after his death by the European traveller-artists. Two oil paintings by the Hungarian artist, Schoefftm need attention because of their recent popularity.[77] First is his Der Hof Von Lahore (The Court of Lahore) and second is the one commissioned by Sher Singh. A recent art historian has named it 'Ranjit Singh listening to the Granth being read to him at Amritsar.'[78]

Schoefft's *The Court of Lahore* depicts the Lahore nobility through five blocks each block representing a faction though without even a factional oneness of purpose or singularity of intention. Originating in Sher Singh's times, the painting was completed in 1852 and presented at the Vienna exhibition in 1855. More than five dozen nobles are shown. Nearly four dozen of them are identifiable. These were the men who had made and destroyed the kingdom. In this way the picture presented the paragraphs of Punjab's history presented 'into one coherent pictorial essay'.[79]

His second painting under consideration depicted Ranjit Singh seated on a large cushion, wearing the Kohinoor set in an amulet on his right arm.[80] The assembly included 'the court-*Bhais*', Ranjit Singh's sons, and Hira Singh. Immediately after the Maharaja sits Kharak Singh. There stands Sher Singh 'partially blocked by an Akali'.[81] On the foreground between the Royal audience and the *granthis,* there plays a child.

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The child 'holds up a hawk'.[82] Who is this child? A recent art historian refused to call it Dalip Singh. He says the child is 'one of the sons of Ranjit Singh's *sardars* who had fallen in battle'.[83]

Be as it may, the painting underlines Ranjit Singh's 'natural affinity' with Amritsar. Interestingly, the two *granthis* can be seen clearly in the picture.

Moreover, the assembly is held in the open *parikarma*. It is guarded by the Akalis. However, it is neither the Darbar Sahib nor the Akal Takht or the Akalis who are under focus. The focus is on the Guru Granth Sahib, the *granthis*, the *sarowar* and the playing child.

Dr. Nazar Singh

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3. See the Umdat-ut-Twarikh Daftar Three (Eng. tr. V. S. Suri), pp. 70-71.
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6. Garrett and G. L. Chopra, See *Events At the Court of Ranjit Singh 1810-17* (tr.) H.L.O. Garrett (reprint), 1988, p. 388.
7. Raghbir Singh, *op. cit.,* p. 73.
8. With the exception of two news sheets of 1823, the*Events* closes at 1817.
9. *Events At the Court of Ranjit Singh 1810-17*, p. 8.
10. Ibid.
11. Garrett and Chopra indirectly identifies the information as Jamadar Khushal Singh in charge of Maharaja's Deorhi, see, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
12. We have used the reprint of this work published by the Languages Department, Punjab, in 1970.
13. See, Cunningham, History from the middle of his chapter V to VII.
14. Ibid., p. 118, footnote 1.
15. This is a reference to *Prachin Panth Prakash* of Rattan Singh Bhangu.
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17. See *Origin of the Sikh Power*, pp. 141-150.
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30 Ibid, pp. 144-45.
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41 See, Nazer Singh, '*Understanding Sikhism Independence and Ranjit Singh*', in *Nanak Prakash Patrika*, June, 2001, pp. 122-24.
42 Cunningham, op. cit.
43 Nazer Singh, *Understanding Sikh Independence,* op. cit.
44 Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 119-20.
45 Ibid., p. 153.
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47 Ibid., p. 157.
48 Ibid., p. 159.
49 Ibid., pp. 159-60.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 195.
52 Ibid., pp. 196-97.
53 Ibid., p. 198.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 198, Note 2.
56 Ibid., p. 199.
57 Ibid., p. 200.
58 Ibid.
59 Art history of the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh, like any other people, has a significance of its own. In this section, our moderate attempt has been to see its genesis in the political and intellectual climate created by the colonial regime. Such an attempt would have not been possible without a work like that of Jean M. Lafont's through Maharaja Ranjit Singh Lord of the Five Rivers, (Oxford, 2002).
60 Dr. Kirpal Singh had briefly touched it in his article 'Reviving the Urban Centres' in Maharaja Ranjit Singh Commemoration Volume, op. cit., pp.140-41.
61 H. R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 577.
62 See, its reprint by the Language Deptt., Punjab, op. cit.
63 H. R. Gupta, op. cit.
64 *History of the Punjab, Rise, Progress and Present Condition of the Sect and Nation of the Sikhs*, Vol. 2, Patiala, 1989, p. 122.
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66 Ibid.
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69 For their brief see Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Jean Maire Lafont, pp. 162-63.
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PART III

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23

WEAK SUCCESSORS OF RANJIT SINGH

Ranjit Singh could foresee the strife which might follow his death and was naturally anxious to secure the continuance of his own lineal descendants on the throne. He took certain measures to ensure smooth and peaceful trend to affairs after his death. Therefore, the guiding principle of his policy towards the English as well as in internal matters was to provide against the likely factors which threatened the stability of his Kingdom. He went all the way to fall in with the policies of the English in order to win their goodwill, hoping that they would uphold his heirs. At the same time, he tried to win the goodwill and devotion of the Jammu chiefs which he expected would ensure their adhesion to his weak successors. With this end in view, he bestowed all possible favours on them. In order to win the personal affections of Raja Dhian Singh, he treated him and his son, Hira Singh, with utmost favour, hoping that the Minister would thereby be prompted to have similar considerations for Kharak Singh.

Such had been the vain hopes giving some solace to the ageing Maharaja, who had been in failing health for some time. Unfortunately, the Lahore Darbar of the latter years came to wear a distinctly different aspect from that of the early years of Maharaja's rule. Most of the Sardars who surrounded him in the earlier phase, were comrades-in-arms, and of mature age. By and large, they were of Jat Sikh peasant origin and proud of their contribution to the glory of the Khalsa. As time passed, these veterans were removed from the scene by the call of the Almighty.

Adventurers from European countries, like France and Italy, Dogra Rajputs from the Jammu hills, Gaur Brahmins from Uttar Pradesh, and Pandits of Kashmiri Brahmins stock had dashed to the Punjab and were employed by the Maharaja and, in the course of time, some of them succeeded in occupying high positions in the Sikh Darbar. The Jat Sikhs, derived from such families as the Attariwalas, the Sandhawalias

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and the Majithias were few. The Maharaja was gradually getting in the lap of old age, when Dhian Singh Dogra played his game. He brought his 12 years old son, Hira Singh, in the Darbar and succeeded in getting a shower of flowers on him. Ranjit Singh loved him as his own son, and the child was always addressing the Maharaja as his father. In the year 1836, he was created a Raja and he assumed a position more prominent even than that of his father and the princes of the Royal blood. Dhian Singh was actually waiting for the day when his son occupied the Khalsa Darbar. This development altered the character of the Darbar and created fresh problems. Naturally, the Sikhs were resentful of the rush of foreigners who had gained predominance in their motherland. The Darbar, therefore, split into many factions fiercely opposed one to the other, holding only in a semblance of harmony by the towering personality of the Maharaja.

Kanwar Kharak Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh left behind him as many as seven sons, born from different women, who had little fraternal affection for one another. Kharak Singh, born in March 1801, to Rani Raj Kaur, the only sister of three brothers, Bhagwan Singh, Gian Singh and Khazan Singh and the second wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to whom he was married in the year 1792, at the age of 12 only. So was Kanwar Kharak Singh who was married to Rani Chand Kaur, daughter of Sardar Jaimal Singh Kanahyia when he was hardly 12 years of age. He was of weak constitution and lacked discipline. He was inactive, being religiously inclined, but addicted to opium and hard liquor. He had been brought up by servants who pandered to all his whims and was thereby unable to develop initiative. He was easy-going but without any of the down-to-earth peasant simplicity which had endeared his father to the masses.

Frequent instances have been known of both Kanwars, Kharak Singh and Sher Singh, being obliged to wait for hours together, and to bribe the gate-keepers and court attendants to procure them permission to go and pay their respects to the old, ailing Maharaja. What an irony of fate! This was the handiwork of Dhian Singh Dogra, Prime Minister. From the date of Hira Singh's birth, Dhian Singh Dogra, by means of the wiliest insinuation, had so well worked himself into the old Lion's favour, that he may be said to have held the reins of Government entirely in his own hands. This way, establishing as the only, or at all events, the chief, favorite of the monarch, he unremittingly employed every endeavour to get rid of the old Sikh *Sardars*, and so weakened their authority that there soon remained not one among them all who possessed either the power or the courage to oppose him in any of his wishes. So far did his influence extend, that no *Sardar*, however, high in rank even though the Maharaja's son, was allowed to enter the presence of the Sikh sovereign without the Dogra Minister's sanction being first received. It was in those days that he succeeded

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in forcing on Ranjit Singh the opinion that Kharak Singh was not of sound or proper mind, and consequently unfit to govern, as he would be expected to do. To convince the Maharaja further, special care was taken that by the insufficiency of means placed at his disposal, the greater part of the expeditions, on which he was sent, should either partially or entirely fail and then he was regarded as being incapable of command. But, it was readily acknowledged by all that, in the early part of his life, he gave the promise of, or in reality possessed, all the abilities requisite for a sovereign of the Punjab; perhaps with one solitary exception, that while not so crafty as the Minister, he was more religious and peacefully inclined and far less ambitious. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, perhaps, foresaw that an authority so recently formed and so ill-cemented would dissolve into fragments at the closing of his second eye, as his successor was utterly incapable of controlling the elements of disorder. He had some reason to conclude thus: Kharak Singh was utterly lacking in ambition and worldly sense and his real interest lay in 'praying, reading the *Granth* and sitting with legs folded and head bowed in the company of holy men'. His lack of spirit and his simple-mindedness were a source of great anxiety to the old Maharaja, because he knew that his successor would need qualities of another order to cope with the forces that his death would release. Alexander Burnes having had an interview with Kharak Singh on August 11, 1837 (only two years before ascending the throne of the Punjab) observed that 'his imbecility is such that he can scarcely return an answer to the most simple question.' He closely resembled his father in features and appearance but, G.T. Vigne opined that he had nothing of that superior intellect of which his father had made so good a use. Henry Edward Fane, who visited Lahore on March 21, 1837, described the Kanwar, as the "least interesting of the whole family. He looks as if he smoked away day and night and had smoked away the whole of his intellects." Fakir Syed Waheed-du-din (a descendant of the *Faqir* family of Lahore) reproduced the following incidents from his family papers, in support of these views expressed by the foreigners:

> "One day Ranjit Singh was admonishing Kharak Singh to learn to look after his private affairs so that he could fit himself to succeed him on the throne. To demonstrate how fast that event was approaching, he pointed to his beard and said, 'Look at my grey beard, my son'. The heir-apparent stepped forward, took the Maharaja's beard in his hand, closely examined it, and exclaimed, 'By God, it has gone all grey'. This was in private audience; but there were courtiers present. One of them was Fakir Aziz-ud-din, who mentions how horrified he was. As regards the Maharaja himself, Aziz-ud-din says that there came a profoundly sad look into his face. What room was there for royal or paternal anger in dealing with an infantile intelligence of this order?
>
> "On another occasion, while Prince Kharak Singh was inspecting the royal stables in the company of Fakir Nur-ud-din under royal command, a horse passed by. Turning to the keeper of the stable, the Prince asked, 'Isn't this the horse that was killed in the battle of

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Nowshera?' 'Yes, Your Highness, it is', promptly replied the quick-witted stable keeper. It must, however, be owned, wrote Carmichael Smyth, that during the la tter years of Ranjit Singh's life, when through the intrigues of the wily Minister, [Dhyan Singh] the Kanwar was treated even by his own father as imbecile and unworthy either of power or confidence, and when all hopes of returning favour were destroyed, his mind gradually assumed a dark and gloomy aspect. This was instantly regarded as a corroborating proof of his being dull and possessed of no abilities, spite of all however, he seemed to bear the whole with a religious meekness and silent acquiescence."

Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh

Son of Maharaja Kharak Singh, and born in February, 1821, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was later married to Bibi Dharam Kaur alias Bibi Nanaki, daughter of Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala, the hero of the battle of Sobraon, on March 7, 1837, by his grandfather, with great pomp and show. His features and disposition bore a striking resemblance to those of his illustrious grandfather, and he was exceedingly popular with the army in consequence of his having chosen the profession of arms – the profession of his ancestors – at a very tender age. He possessed an ambitious and warlike spirit which, combined with consummate fore-thoughts, a keen judgment, and a clear insight into business matters, qualified him thoroughly for the position to which he aspired. The Lion of the Punjab was dotingly fond of his grandson and justly cherished the hope that he would one day rule the destinies of the vast kingdom founded by him. Though not very handsome, he was quite intelligent, bold and courageous. In his moral habits, he was sober and comparatively temperate amidst the scenes of debauchery which surrounded him. He was comparatively free from the vices, natural to his age and quite prevalent in his time.

No doubt, the Kanwar was a capable administrator and knew how to combine the discretion of a statesman with the best virtues of a soldier. G.T. Vigne expected that Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh would again sway the scepter of the Moguls on the throne of Delhi. Joseph Davey Cunningham had expressed a very high opinion about the Kanwar thus: "Had his life been spared and had not the English policy partly forestalled him, he would have found an ample field for his ambition in Sindh, in Afghanistan, and beyond the Hindoo Koosh; and he might, perhaps at last, have boasted that the inroads of Mehmood and of Tymoor had been fully avenged by the aroused peasants of India."

The Kanwar knew riding, shooting and other military exercise. G.T. Vigne was elated with surprise and envy when the youthful Kanwar performed, in a better way, a feat of galloping at the speed with a drawn sword and cutting a brass-pot (*lota*) on the ground in passing. At the tender age of 14, he was given the command of army

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sent to Peshawar, in the present North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan, and his super-performance in the field led to his appointment as the Governor of Peshawar province. In early 1839, he led the Sikh forces to Peshawar, the stronghold of the fanatic Afghans, when under the Tripartite Treaty of 1838, the Sikh and British Governments both decided to place Shah Shujah-ul-Mulk on the throne of Kabul. He was a straight-forward person and would never resort to trickery, so essential and valuable, for carrying out his scheme.

The Kanwar was, of course, endowed with firmness of character and the Dogra Trio really dreaded him. According to Colonel H. Steinbach, he was the only person capable of controlling the power of Dhian Singh Dogra and his brothers. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was very proud of him and fondly anticipated that, in him, the Sikhs would find a successor worthy of filling the throne of Lahore and preserving the Kingdom entire. Native and foreign authors like Charles Masson, Bhai Gian Singh and Lala Sohan Lal Suri agreed that the whole Sikh People entertained great hopes and high expectation of the young prince.

Unfortunately, Maharaja Kharak Singh had quarreled violently with Dhian Singh Dogra by ordering that he should not enjoy free admission to the Palace. Gravely offended, the Dogra minister feared that Chet Singh Bajwa, an advisor of the Maharaja, would soon replace him. He, therefore, chose the path of treachery and started taking measures to discredit both the Maharaja and the Bajwa Sardar. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was hastily summoned from Peshawar to sideline the Maharaja, to assume the powers of his father and to himself regain his authority that was being reduced by the Maharaja. But the Kanwar also stopped after some time the Dogra minister to enter the palace. Disgruntled, the Dogra minister started befooling the Kanwar and even Sandhawalia Sardars, and perpetrated the murder of the Bajwa Sardar with their active help in the palace. This brutal murder brought the breach between father and son which resulted in the rule practically falling in the hands of the Dogras. The Maharaja had fallen ill earlier in December 1839 and royal physicians had suspected that slow poison was being administered to him. Yet, the Kanwar never visited his ailing father, the real Maharaja of the Punjab. Kanwar's vigor and resolutions were further marred by an impetuous and violent temper. Intolerant of the English and his virtual assumption of power at that early stage were unwise political steps of the time. Earlier, at the instance of the Dogra minister, he had gone to the extent of putting in prison the entire family of Misr Beli Ram (Incharge of Toshakhana and custodian of Royal treasure at Gobindgarh fort) on the flimsy charge that the Misr had refused to show to the Kanwar the Treasury. He had actually fallen in the treacherous trap of the cunning Dogra Minister who was busy in paving the way for his own son to sit on the throne. Soon after the death of the Maharaja, the Kanwar also had to suffer death at the early

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age of about 19 years and give a good-bye to the kingship at the instance of the Dogra Minister, who succeeded to replace him with another son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh for his personal gains. They all became his scape-goats.

Kanwar Sher Singh

Mai Chand Kaur, mother of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, was nowhere in the list of successors to the throne of Lahore after the demise of the Lion of the Punjab. The next heir was Sher Singh, the second son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, born to Rani Mehtab Kaur, the grand-daughter of Sardar Jai Singh Kanahyia, in 1807. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was away to his cis-Sutlej campaign while the Rani was pregnant and, on his return, she presented him with Sher Singh and Tara Singh as her twin-sons. It was rumoured, as was the practice in the Courts of the Indian rulers, that Sher Singh was the son of a chintz weaver, named Nihala, a native of Mukerian, in the present Hoshiarpur District, then in the *Jagir* of Mai Sada Kaur (mother of Rani Mehtab Kaur), while Tara Singh was the son of a Mohammadan woman, daughter of Manki, a slave girl of Mai Sada Kaur. The Maharaja was not, however, deceived in the matter and he acknowledged the children as his own. They both bore the title of *Shahzada* or Prince.

Kanwar Sher Singh was first married in 1819 to Bibi Desan, daughter of Sardar Mohar Singh Nakai, then a *Jagirdar* only, as his family's estate of Kot Kamalia, Sayyadwala, etc., was seized by Maharaja Ranjit Singh from him earlier. This lady died issueless after two years. In 1831, he married Prem Kaur, daughter of Sardar Hari Singh Waraich Jat, *Lambardar* of village Ladhewala in Gujranwala district (now in Pakistan). In 1831, she gave birth to Kanwar Partap Singh, who, in September 1843, was brutally murdered by Sardar Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia. Kanwar Sher Singh was found mentally better equipped than Kanwar Kharak Singh. In course of time, Maharaja had bestowed upon him all appropriate honours and dignities but his twin brother, Tara Singh, experienced uniform neglect. Sher Singh, however, enjoyed the privilege of a chair in the Maharaja's presence – an honour he shared with Kanwar Kharak Singh, the heir apparent to the throne. His physical and mental capacities were also far superior to those of Kanwar Kharak Singh and Nau Nihal Singh. He was handsome and courteous. He was a bit of a dilettante and dressed with meticulous care. He used expensive perfumes and applied pomades to curl his moustaches and set his beard, which he parted in the middle and tucked upwards towards his ears. He liked good food and French wines. He was fond of women and women were fond of him. He admired the English, and the English preferred him to any of the other claimants. He was well-conversant with the factions and groups in the Sikh Darbar. He had an intense eagerness for knowledge and had actually devoted some attention to European skill, industry and learning. Contrary to the Maharaja himself, he was

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much enamoured of European manners and customs and affected these so far as to arouse the jealousy of the old Maharaja who was a strict Sikh. This was his minus-point. Sandhanwalia Sardars, who were collaterals of the Maharaja, were also the partisans of Kanwar Kharak Singh and were hostile towards Sher Singh.

In the last few years of the Maharaja's regime, the Council of Ministers and the nobility at the Darbar had assumed unusually greater importance, in the absence of leadership from the Royal family. This had completely disturbed the ailing Maharaja and he seemed well conscious of the state of affairs and, a few days before he closed his second eye, he had ordered the whole of his superior officers, European and Indian, to be assembled in his presence, and caused them to take oath of allegiance to the heir apparent, Kanwar Kharak Singh who, contrary to general expectations, apparently succeeded to the throne, without the slightest tumult, opposition or obstacle. The Maharaja was, however, well aware that his heirs were so weak that they would not be able to retain the Kingdom for a longer period.

Sher Singh was addicted to pleasure, and had been in the habit of indulging in the use of spirituous liquors to an immoderate extent before he assumed the reins of Government. Firmly established in his kingdom, he gave himself up to his favourate pursuits, hunting and wrestling, paying but little attention to affairs of State, which were left entirely in the hands of his crafty minister, Dhian Singh Dogra. Sher Singh was brave and of a mild and affable disposition, but sometime later, had become a complete libertine and an open drunkard, indulging especially in champagne. The marble palace garden, opposite the royal mosque of Aurangzeb, was his favourate resort of pleasure, and he used to sit on his bed of roses, with wreaths of flowers hanging over the beautiful marble arches, and rose and musk water sprinkled on the ground, while bands of musicians discoursed sweet music. Whether in the palace garden of Hazuri Bagh, or in the marble summer house of Shalimar, or the crystal palace of the Summen Burj, or the favourite *Baradari* of Shah Bilawal, bands of musicians and beautiful damsels were always in attendance upon him. Indulgence in wine and women was considered a social matter and it did not require any very great prophetic power to foretell the inevitable results of this debauchery of the King and his subjects. Sadly, soon afterwards there commenced those civil feuds and broils which brought this great kingdom, formed by the Lion of the Punjab, near its ends.

There was also no other prince who was found able to preserve the state for long. Kashmira Singh, Pashaura Singh, Multana Singh were virtually kept at a distance from the Lahore Darbar and Dalip Singh was only a few months old when Maharaja Ranjit Singh left for the Heavenly abode. One may remember an anecdote about a map shown to the Maharaja by an English cartographer, when the Maharaja had asked him, "What does the red colour stand for"? The reply was, "Red indicates the extent

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of British possessions in the Country." The Maharaja had scanned the map a little more carefully with his single eye and saw that the whole of India, except the Punjab, was painted red. Pausing for a while, he prophetically remarked to the courtiers in attendance: "One day it will all be red." Osborne was also prophetic when, in 1838, he wrote: "It is a melancholy thing to contemplate the future probable state of this beautiful country." The state had, in fact, reached its climax. Its past achievements might have struck the eyes of casual observers but those well informed were quite conscious of its impending fate in the near future. The three-fold factors which had already become manifest, namely, the ever-tightening circle of English power and influence round this kingdom, the contending parties at the Darbar and, the worst of all, the well-known incapacities of the heir – all these had unmistakably pierced the heart of the old Maharaja and indicating as likely to hasten the end of Sikh independence.

Avtar Singh Gill

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2. Dr. Martin Honigberger - *Thirty Five Years in the East.*
3. Carmichael Smyth-*A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore* (1847).
4. *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing.*, W.G. Osborne
5. *A Personal Narration of a Visit to Ghuzni,Kabul and Afghanistan* (1843).
6. *Five Years in India*, Vol. I (1842).
7. *The Real Ranjit Singh*
8. Allen & Co. - *History of the Punjab Vol. II*, pp. 217-8 (London) 1846.
9. L. H. Griffin - *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 2.
10. A Personal Narrative of a visit to Ghuzni, Kabul and Afghanistan (London) 1843.
11. *A History of the Sikhs* (London) 1849.
12. *The Punjaub* (London) 1845.
13. *Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Punjab*, Vol. I. p.442 (London) 1842.
14. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, p.651.
15. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* Vol.IV.
16. W. G. Osborne - *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing* p. 64.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. S.M. Latif, *History of Punjab* (1889), reprint (1964), pp. 507-8.
20. W. G. Osborne - *The Court and Camp of Runjeet Sing*, p. 52.
21. 'Oh king, live for ever,' the salutation with which the trembling Chaldeans greeted Nebuchadnezzar when he demanded the interpretation of his dream, might well have been the supplication which filled the minds of Ranjit Singh's courtiers during the last few years of his life, as they thought of his excesses, his waning powers, and the cataclysm his death would let loose. When that event occurred, even before his ashes had been consigned to the Ganges, the long restrained waters of suspicion and hate began to find an escape, and sap the foundations of the dam, which he alone had known how to construct and keep in repair." (S.S. Tborburn, The Punjab in Peace and War, p. 26).

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ROLE OF DOGRAS IN SIKH KINGDOM

DOGRA TRIO IN LAHORE

Mian Kashore Singh had three sons, Gulab Singh born in 1788, Dhian Singh born in 1797 and Suchet Singh born in 1801. Mian Gulabu and Mian Dhianu, then called, lived with their grand uncle, Mian Mota, at Jammu, while their brother Suchetu and father, Kishore Singh, resided at Village Ismail Deoli, near Jammu, deriving their subsistence from the produce of a few parcels of land. Gulabu, then aged about 19, accompanied by Dhianu, then aged only 10, traversed the hilly area and hastily reached Lahore in the hope of building their fortune there. They idled away three months at Lahore but could not procure an introduction with the Maharaja, and they returned to Jammu disappointed. A little later, one Dulo advanced some money to Kishore Singh for the marriage of the elder two sons and to purchase horses and out-fit for them to join the service as *Ghorecharas* under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Mian Mota provided them with credentials and the two brothers repaired on horse-backs to Lahore where they met Diwan Chand Misr, who treated them with respect and promised to assist them. The Maharaja employed them on subsistence allowance of Rs. 3 per day each and they acquired all the requisite habits and manners of the Sikh Darbar within a few months. In 1812, Dhianu started receiving Rs. 5 per day, and Gulabu had only Rs. 4 a day. The stars now favoured them and, in quick succession, their pay was doubled and tripled and presents from the Maharaja started pouring in. At the close of the year, they had sent home to their family no less than three thousand rupees, to pay off the debts and to make provision for their livelihood. This was the unlucky time for the Sikh Kingdom to have chosen and accepted the Dogras to join the service of the Maharaja.

The two brothers were then the most favoured in the Court. In 1818, the Maharaja sent for their younger brother, Suchetu, then a lad of 17, who also immediately won for him the regard of the Maharaja. The younger two were well instructed by Gulabu

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as to how they had to play the part for securing the affections of the King. Tired of the mal-administration, at the close of the year 1813, the Maharaja took a bold decision of replacing Jamadar Khushal Singh, who was incharge of Jammu, and delivering the country over to the Rajput brothers. Gulabu had managed to fill his master's mind with distrust of the Jamadar by describing him as engaged in schemes for establishing an independent Kingdom in the hills for himself. Gulabu thus obtained, by deception, a *Jagir* of about forty *lakhs* of *rupees* per year near Jammu and Bhimber and, leaving his younger brother at the Court to push the family interests, left for his *jagir*.

The Maharaja, later was forced to bestow the title of Raja on the three brothers in 1818 and to these titles, *jagirs* from *rupees* one *lakh* to three *lakhs* were appended. Gulab Singh left Lahore for Jammu to take possession of the seat of his ancestors, as an almost independent prince, leaving Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh at the Court. Thus, the three Dogra Brothers in the course of time monopolised all the power and influence of the Lahore Darbar. Dhian Singh, in reality became the regent of the Punjab during the latter years of its aged sovereign. Gulab Singh ruled his subjects with an iron hand and, by and by, extended his sway over all the petty independent chiefs of the neighboring states. His avarice and cruelty were boundless; Gulab Singh Dogra had himself once told Herbert Edwards: "Sometimes when I wished to frighten a man, I (Gulab Singh Dogra) had him scalped, all but a little piece, and just as he thought he was really going to be killed, I put his scalp on again and let him go." This he told with a bland smile, as if talking of peeling apples. Henry Hardinge once went to the extent of remarking that the man, whom he has to deal with, Gulab Singh, was the greatest rascal in Asia. Lord Dalhousie had also written to the Duke of Wellington, after he was made the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir that he ought not to be trusted and would not be trusted by him for one minute. K.M. Panniker also opined that where his interest required, he did not hesitate to resort to tricks and stratagems which would, in ordinary life, be considered dishonourable.

Dhian Singh Dogra, despite possessing many qualities, was also made up of a most diabolical, wily, deceptive, crafty, dissembling, faithless, subtle, deep, dark, designing, and ruthless disposition. And all for what? Ambition! He was ever determined and indefatigable to gain his end, but blind to the sacrifice it required, even to his own life, person, honour and character, and even to that of his wife, sons and family; all were shamefully sacrificed to the one consuming passion, ambition, and the thirst for aggrandizement. He made ambitious plans and, very carefully, executed them in the face of strong opposition, and counter-moves.

Dogra Versus Sikh Nobility

In the absence of leadership from the Royal family, the Council of Ministers and

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the nobility at the Darbar assumed unusually greater importance. Since, their primary interest was to enlarge their personal estates and privileges, they found it politic to play one claimant to the throne against the other. Two factions emerged soon after the demise of the late Maharaja, Ranjit Singh. The more influential were the three Dogra brothers, Gulab Singh (later founder of Jammu & Kashmir State), Dhian Singh (Prime Minister) and Suchet Singh, and Hira Singh (son of Dhian Singh), who had been a great favourite of the late Maharaja. Although, the three brothers were not always in accord, one or the other member of the family managed to be in effective power at Lahore and allowed his other kinsmen to set up an almost independent Dogra Kingdom in the hills of Jammu and Kashmir. Opposed to them were the Sikh nobility, particularly the Sandhanwalias, Attariwalas and Majithias, who were related closely to the Royal family. Lehna Singh, Attar Singh and Ajit Singh Sandhawalia, who were also connected to Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur, wife of Kanwar Kharak Singh, were the most influential. Sham Singh (of Sabraon fame), Chattar Singh and his sons, Sher Singh and Gulab Singh (heroes of the second Anglo-Sikh war) were, at that time, of little consequence. The head of the Majithia family was the celebrated Lehna Singh, a scholarly person of somewhat retiring habits, and the young Ranjodh Singh, who was a military Commander of note. The one thing members of these factions had in common was the desire to reduce the Crown to a mere cipher and become, like the Peshwas of the Marathas, the real rulers of the Country. In doing so, few of them had any scruples about the methods they used to gain their ends: murder by poison or by hired assassins, betrayal of friends and relations after the most solemn vows, forging documents to discredit their rivals and, worst of all, negotiating with the British who were then known to be planning the annexation of the Punjab.

Dhian Singh Dogra had been promoted as the Prime Minister in which capacity he amassed enormous wealth, became master of a large mountainous country in Little Tibet and on the borders of Kashmir, maintaining an army of 25,000 men and fine artillery. He not only acquired the confidence of the late Maharaja but exercised great influence over the Sikh Nation. There had been some whispers, when Kanwar Kharak Singh ascended the throne quietly, that Dhian Singh Dogra wanted his son, Hira Singh Dogra, to snatch the throne to establish Dogra Raj in Punjab, but the Sikh *sardars* were then fairly strong for his evil intentions and he had to postpone the idea for sometime. The Prime Minister, who had openly sworn before the late Maharaja, Rani Kattochan, and the multitude of courtiers and *sardars* only a few weeks back, that he would remain faithful to the Kanwar and the State, started opposing the acts and conduct of the Kanwar, to get rid of his opponent, Chet Singh Bajwa, who was exercising great influence over the new Maharaja.[1]

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Distrust between Maharaja and Kanwar

Dhian Singh Dogra had started disliking Kanwar Kharak Singh on account of the influence exercised by the Bajwa Sardar over the Kanwar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had farmed out the province of Kashmir to the Kanwar in February 1839. This naturally gave great offence to Gulab Singh Dogra and his two brothers, who started intriguing with Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, the only son of Kanwar Kharak Singh, to physically liquidate his father who, being the declared heir to the throne was acceptable to the Sikhs. Chet Singh Bajwa, however, continued to enjoy full confidence and exercised complete influence over Kharak Singh. He had been persuading the Maharaja to give up his dissolute ways and take his duties as a monarch more seriously. Kharak Singh had also been publicly extolling Bajwa's capabilities and treating him on the same level as other ministers of the Government. Dogra brothers could not lie low in that situation. Major Henry Court[2] described the circumstances which widened the gap between the Maharaja and the Raja. Maharaja, in order to diminish the power of Dhian Singh Dogra, ordered him not to go into the royal female apartment – *Zenankhana*, assuring him that his power and authority would not be decreased further. The Raja took great offence at it at heart and enmity arose between the two from that day. Dhian Singh Dogra had not forgotten the days when, at all times, he had the full permission to enter the *Zenankhana* of the old Maharaja and, hence, it was that the majority of his intrigues and schemes succeeded; the women there obeyed him, for they dreaded him far more than even their own Lord. Major G. C. Smyth[3] recorded, that Hira Singh Dogra was a continual resident in the *Zenankhana* and through him, all the secrets of Maharaja Ranjit Singh became known to the Prime Minister and his party. The new sovereign was well aware how his late father had been duped in every way by the Prime Minister, and, accordingly, one of his first orders was that, though Dhian Singh Dogra should be treated in every respect as a good Counselor and Minister, the former custom and privilege of his own and his son's free admission into the King's *Zenankhana* should no longer be allowed; Dhian Singh Dogra, however, told the Maharaja that, without this permission, he could not act as he wished nor as he formerly did. Thus, first began the breach between Kharak Singh and his Minister; the latter of whom harboured from this time a settled hatred to the Monarch, his advisors and his old servants.

A few days later, Chet Singh Bajwa informed the Maharaja that Dhian Singh Dogra had given out that until he obtained the full powers he previously had, he would not conduct the duties of the Prime Minister properly. With many other such things, he turned the Maharaja against his Prime Minister. The latter also felt, on account of his own guilty conscience, that the Maharaja would give him much trouble and he falsely gave out that the Maharaja and the Bajwa Sardar had made an agreement

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with the English, in consequence of which he would shortly dismiss the army and the officers. Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh had also entered the arena and started forming his own party. The sad news of the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh had reached him late, while he was still at Peshawar. He himself left for Lahore in the last week of August 1839, as he himself wanted to be the Prime Minister or *Mukhtar*, while acknowledging his father as Maharaja, but Dhian Singh Dogra was quite vigilant about the happenings around him and had made up his mind to create distrust between the Maharaja and the Kanwar to achieve his own evil designs. Only about two weeks after he had sworn on the dead body of his late Master not to create a wedge between Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and his father, he had caused to be sent a *Parwana*, sealed with the seal of Maharaja Kharak Singh, prohibiting him from any interference with the political business of the State. Dhian Singh Dogra, Master of Palace intrigues, was disconcerted at this *Parwana* of the Kanwar.

Chet Singh Bajwa had taken up his residence with Maharaja Kharak Singh in the Lahore Fort and the Maharaja also became a mere puppet in his hands. He mustered sufficient courage to put himself as a rival to Dhian Singh Dogra. Misr Beli Ram, his brother Misr Ram Kishan, Bhai Ram Singh and Bhai Gurmukh Singh became the advisors of the Sardar and started interference in the affairs of the State. On September 2, 1839, Dhian Singh Dogra complained to the Maharaja that Misr Beli Ram was very little attentive to his orders.[4] General Ventura[5] was opposed to the Prime Minister and he also supported the Bajwa Sardar against his rival. On July 11, 1839, Hira Singh Dogra, his youngest uncle Suchet Singh Dogra, Mangal Singh and others were ordered to remove themselves from the Fort to the City. Chet Singh Bajwa then openly stated in the Darbar that Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh was well qualified to conduct the affairs of the Government, meaning that Dhian Singh Dogra was not indispensable. The Prime Minister soon found his authority virtually annulled and revenge for the loss of power took possession of his thoughts. He soon found an opportunity of carrying his intentions into effect. The Prime Minister and the Bajwa Sardar each plotted for the other's downfall. In the third week of September 1839, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh reached Lahore from Peshawar and the Prime Minister firmly attached himself to this young man in the two-fold expectations of ridding himself of his obnoxious rival and obtaining the full restoration of his power and authority as Prime Minister. Chet Singh Bajwa living with the Maharaja in the Fort raised two battalions of bodyguards in the vain hope of gaining superiority over the cunning *Raja*.

War of Nerves Commenced

The Trio Dogra brothers now decided upon bringing the Maharaja and his Advisor to public contempt. Dhian Singh Dogra gave out everywhere that Maharaja Kharak

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Singh and Chet Singh Bajwa had made an agreement with the English and agreed to pay six-sixteenth of the revenue to them and, he would soon dismiss the Army and all the officers and Chiefs.[6] This rumour, circulated through the town, became the chief topic of conversation in the markets and streets and the civil and military freely vented their indignation at this supposed treacherous compact. Kharak Singh was openly calumniated, and the soldiery began to look upon him as a traitor, unworthy of his position.[7] Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh had already reached, together with Gulab Singh Dogra, under orders from Dhian Singh Dogra to consummate his first plan to uproot the Sikh Kingdom. They both entered Lahore together on September 17, 1839. Gulab Singh Dogra accompanied Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh to Lahore and had so tutored him, both in Peshawar and on his way to Lahore, that he entered the latter city as the avowed enemy of his father. Dhian Singh Dogra, his brother Gulab Singh Dogra and their party pleaded their cause so well with Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and his mother, Rani Chand Kaur, that they obtained their permission alongwith that of other *sardars* to assassinate Chet Singh Bajwa and to imprison the Maharaja or use other methods to deprive him of the powers. To that end, they revived the story of intrigue with the British and even produced forged letters bearing the signatures of Maharaja Kharak Singh and his Advisor in proof of their charge. Both the Dogra Brothers upheld that this step was the only one to be taken by which to secure the country from the power of the British. Everything was agreed to, and even Rani Chand Kaur was so worked on by her fears of the British that she consented to the ignoble act of dethroning and imprisoning even her husband. Thus, the whole of this conspiracy was carried out with the utmost secrecy until the time was ripe for action.[8]

Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh, Dogra brothers, General Ventura, and others recommended the Maharaja to ask the Kanwar to discharge all functions of the State in his presence, with a design to virtually shunt out the Bajwa Sardar from the *de facto* Prime Ministership. The Maharaja sensed the mischievous idea behind this demand and declined the recommendations. The Kanwar then asked the Maharaja to leave the hand of his incapable advisor and to own Dhian Singh Dogra as the Prime Minister, but it had no effect upon him. On September 24, the Kanwar also urged the Maharaja, through Hira Singh Dogra, but he did not accept the advice. On the following day, Giani Ram Singh and Gobind Ram absented themselves from the Darbar. Jamadar Khushal Singh, and the Kanwar also withdrew from attending the Court.[9] Dhian Singh Dogra played the same tune, as planned. Lehna Singh Majithia made efforts for reconciliation but in vain. The Maharaja saw through the successive events, in unusual rapidity, and directed Chet Singh Bajwa, on September 29, to appear only as other officers did at the Darbar and Dhian Singh Dogra to carry on the affairs as in the time of the late Maharaja. The force on duty to protect the person of Bajwa Sardar was

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sent back.[10] The Maharaja tried to retrieve the situation by suggesting that the Bajwa Sardar and the Dogra Raja act in concert, but Dhian Singh Dogra again refused to collaborate and the Kanwar remained adamant,[11] for obvious reasons of usurping power and Kingship. The Maharaja also could not stick to that position and, on October 2, passed orders, in modification of his earlier orders, that Dhian Singh Dogra should carry on the administration in concert with Chet Singh Bajwa, but the Dogra Raja replied that he would obey the orders of the Maharaja only and that he could not serve the Bajwa Sardar.

Chet Singh Bajwa, on October 7, 1839 made a rash remark in the Darbar to Dhian Singh Dogra declaring his clear intention to murder him, saying: 'See what will become of you in twenty four hours'. The Raja just smiled politely and said: 'Very well, Sir, we shall see'. as he had already comprehended the death of his rival and formed a plot, in concert with the Kanwar, to this end. The *sardars* joining hands with the Dogras were now played upon.[12] Dhian Singh Dogra rushed to the Royal *Zenankhana* and obtained the willing consent of Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh and his minor wife Nanki, that the Bajwa Sardar be killed, the Maharaja be relieved from active public life and the Kanwar be appointed the Regent.[13] The conspiracy was, however, kept a strict secret until the plan was ripe for action.[14] The Dogra brothers, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, thus misled the Kanwar and his mother and obtained an order to put the Bajwa Sardar to ignoble death.[15] The Kanwar and Rani Chand Kaur had joined the plot on the condition that no bodily injury should be offered to the Maharaja.[16] The powerful Sandhanwalia family, Bhai Ram Singh and the Sikh Sardars of the French Brigade also joined hands with the conspirators.[17] Hugh Pearse mentioned that Dhian Singh Dogra had issued instructions to the Forces to keep perfect silence during that fateful night and the whole of this conspiracy was carried on with great secrecy.

Preparations and Attempts for Revenge

On the night intervening October 7-8, 1839, at about 2:00 A.M., Dhian Singh Dogra, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, all their associates and the troops arranged and equipped, entered the Fort by Bhai Dayawal's gate and proceeded towards the Maharaja's residence. The party stealthily advanced, like hungry animals, and penetrated, without causing alarm, up a dark flight of stairs, over the Badshahi Takht and thence towards the sleeping apartment of the Maharaja where the Bajwa Sardar was also putting up. The Dogra *Rajas*, Dhian Singh and Gulab Singh, joined their heads together and held a whispered consultation. Kahan Singh *Garwai* (water carrier) was found by the party returning to the Maharaja in his sleeping room Dhian Singh Dogra, fired at him and the innocent victim instantaneously breathed his last at the

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spot. Gulab Singh Dogra immediately remonstrated with and reprimanded his desperate brother for his act of indiscretion and imprudence, giving strict orders to the assassins to accomplish the object with the aid of swords.[18] According to G. C. Smyth[19] when the party reached the bedroom of the Maharaja, Chet Singh Bajwa, quietly slipped out and concealed himself in a long and dark chamber, close to and in the rear of the apartment of the Maharaja.

Sohan Lal Suri[20] has given a different version: The whole party reached the front of the Throne Chamber but the Kanwar was prohibited entry therein. Both, Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh, went up, by way of staircase, alongwith Attar Singh, to the roof of the Throne Chamber. Dhian Singh Dogra required of his master to open the door but the Maharaja refused to open the door on which the perpetrators of the crime threatened to break open the door, and reluctantly, the door was opened. The Bajwa Sardar was not then found in the bed room of the Maharaja, 'Where is your boon companion?' asked some one in the party. The Maharaja replied truthfully that he had fled on hearing the report of a shot fired. Another version[21] recorded was, that the Maharaja was found almost naked, cowering under some furniture and he begged, in abject terms, of life and was assured that no violence was meditated against him. He would certainly have been killed but for the presence of the Kanwar and injunction of his wife. The party was about to give up the search when Misr Lal Singh caught the gleam to a shining object at the end of a long, narrow passage and found the victim hiding in the dark chamber, crouching in the corner of the *Khwabgah,* holding a drawn sword in both his hands.

Dogra Quenched the Thirst

The Bajwa Sardar was immediately dragged out to the doorway into the presence of Dhian Singh Dogra. The Maharaja begged all the party members to forgive his minion, but in vain. Instead, the Maharaja's hands were pinned behind him where he sat a helpless on-looker. Dhian Singh Dogra, dagger in hand, slowly advanced towards his enemy and, grinding his teeth, remarked: 'The twenty four hours you were courteous enough to mention to me have not yet elapsed.' Then, with the spring of a tiger, the successful plotter dashed at his enemy and drove the dagger twice through the chest with his own hand. Hugh Pearse[22] agreed that, while plunging the dagger in the heart of his rival, Dhian Singh Dogra cried out: 'Take this in the memory of (Maharaja) Ranjit Singh'. The soul of the late Maharaja, who was responsible for raising the Dogra brothers from petty cultivators of a few acres of land in a small village near Jammu to the Makers of Kings in the Punjab, must have been shaken when Dhian Singh Dogra had uttered those unsavoury words, while quenching his own thirst for power. Anyway, the Bajwa Sardar fell wounded and was literally hacked to pieces by

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the infuriated assassin, with successive strokes of the blood-besmeared dagger. Such was the sad end of royal favourite at the hands of Dhian Singh Dogra who, for a time, succeeded in holding the office of Minister under Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, as from that day, the Maharaja was not suffered to take any share in the administration of Public affairs and he was present at the Darbar, clothed with the insignia of Royalty, but sat like a statue and was really kept in strict confinement.

This assassination opened a floodgate of several scenes of bloodshed, from which even the all powerful Dhian Singh Dogra himself could not escape, leading to the eclipse of the secular Kingdom of Punjab within a short period of ten years after the death of its Maker who had to establish it with the blood and flesh of the brave Punjabis during a long period of 40 years. It was all the more unfortunate that, of all the State dignitaries, the trusted Prime Minister should have been the first to stain his hands with blood. S.S. Thorburn was right in remarking that the murder of Chet Singh Bajwa was the first of the political murders which, in a few years, removed most of the men holding place in the Punjab at the time of the signing of the Tripartite Treaty in 1838.[23] S. M. Latif remarked that this assassination was the beginning of those numerous scenes of bloodshed and horror which have left an ineffaceable blot on the history of the Sikh regime in the Punjab.[24]

The Prime Minister did not feel like quench his thirst with the blood of his enemy alone. He proposed to Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh to put to end Gurdit Singh, brother of Chet Singh Bajwa, and to remove his other relatives from their influence at the Darbar. Gurdit Singh was then slain and his other brothers and cousins, Hardit Singh, Wazir Singh and Fateh Singh were removed to the Kangra Fort.[25] Misr Lal Singh then confiscated the property left by the Bajwa Sardar.[26] While, the State dignitaries of the Punjab were engaged in the enactment of savage drama, the British across the Sutlej were not unaware of all that happened.

Kanwar Naunihal Singh in Power

The Kanwar had assumed the power shortly after the brutal murder of Chet Singh Bajwa at the hands of the Dogra Prime Minister, though Maharaja Kharak Singh continued to be the titular sovereign of Punjab. The Kanwar, had also made it clear to all that he meant to govern the Punjab personally and effectively. So, they all now began to chafe under the Kanwar's iron rule. The all powerful Dhian Singh Dogra, a past-master in intrigues and hypocrisy, moaned that it would have been better for him if he had perished on the funeral pyre of the Maharaja. Soon, he came round and accepted, though reluctantly, to be one of the seven Ministers. The Council of Ministers included, Faqir Aziz-ud-din, Jamadar Khushal Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia and Lehna Singh Majithia.[27] Within a couple of months, the

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Punjab felt the spirit of the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been resurrected in the person of his grandson. The Kanwar now realized that the Dogras had become inconveniently powerful. On November 5, 1840, early in the morning, Maharaja Kharak Singh breathed his last.

Death Beneath the Gateway

After having bathed in the Ravi nearby, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, attended by the whole court, started back towards the Fort. The Kanwar had to pass first through the gateway,[28] facing *Hazuri Bagh* and *Badshahi Masjid*. Captain Gardiner was directed by Dhian Singh Dogra to go and immediately bring forty of his artillerymen in their fatigue dresses. Just before the Kanwar entered that archway, by coincident, he took the hand of Mian Udham Singh, the eldest son of Gulab Singh Dogra, and the two proceeded through the gateway of the Fort together. They continued walking on foot slowly, hand in hand, and as they entered the archway,[29] a loud crash was heard. The heavy battlements of the gateway – the beams, stones and tiles – fell from above striking the two young men to the ground. The large stone fell on Mian Udham Singh, broke his neck and killed him at the spot. The arrow of destiny was aimed at the target of the head and left arm of the Kanwar who fell unconscious, breathing heavily but neither moved nor spoke. None was sure then whether the blow was mortal or not. Captain Gardiner, who was earlier ordered by Dhian Singh Dogra to bring a force of artillerymen, arrived at the scene of tragedy immediately after the incident. He later recorded that one[30] of the *palki*-bearers, who removed the injured Kanwar, told him later that he saw a wound above the right ear which bled so slightly as only to cause a blotch of blood about the size of a rupee on the pillow or cloth on which his head rested, while he was in the *palki*. Blood neither flowed nor trickled in any quantity before his being taken out. Dhian Singh Dogra immediately[31] taking up the prince in his arms, placed in the *palki* and conveyed him to the Hazuri Bagh into the *baradari* and then to the octagonal tower, as the *baradari* was a place frequented by most men, with a direction that nobody should go in from outside.

At about sunset, Dhian Singh Dogra locked[32] the Kanwar up in an inner apartment. Lehna Singh Majithia attempted to follow the *palki* but the Raja, instantly pushed him away. In vain did other *sardars* entreat admittance.[33] "When the sad news trickled in the streets and bazaars, people became so filled with sorrow and grief that none of them could attend to his comfort and ease in that surprise and anxiety.[34] Lal Chand, the *vakil* of the Kanwar, also informed Mai Chand Kaur of all the truth and the injury to the Kanwar, on which she expressed hundred kinds of sorrows and, set up a great deal of crying and weeping. Mai Sahiba ordered him to go at once to the Fort and submit to her the exact and true statement about the Kanwar, but he was

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checked by the guards at the Gates with the words that, under orders of Dhian Singh Dogra, nobody could go in from outside. In vain, the Maharani, the mother of the injured Kanwar, in a paroxysm of rage and anxiety, came and beat her head against the gates of the Fort and raised heart-rending shrieks and cries[35] to be allowed to see her only son. The gates were shut against even members of the royal family and not even his wives of tender age were suffered to see him. The blood-besmeared clothes of the unfortunate Mai Sahiba, with severe injuries on her head and hands, amply portrayed the inner feeling of the helpless widowed mother of the Kanwar. On Thursday, November 5, 1840, shortly after the tragic event, the Dogra had sent a letter to Lawrence, Administrator of Ferozepur, informing him that Maharaja Kharak Singh had expired and Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh had received serious injury on account of the bricks of the roof of the gate. All the officers were given a royal order not to write anything without the orders of Dhian Singh Dogra.

The Dreadful News Broken

Dhian Singh Dogra, a mastermind in intrigues, being well aware that if Maharani Chand Kaur became the sovereign of the Punjab, it would not be long before the only party[36] he now really dreaded, would hurl both him and his family from the high position they then held, speedily urged upon the Sardars of the dire necessity of placing Sher Singh on the throne. Bhai Mahan Singh, the confidential agent of Kanwar Sher Singh, and other special servants were appointed to contact Kanwar Sher Singh in village Kahnuan, where he had gone on a shooting expedition, with a letter signed by Dhian Singh Dogra, informing him of the vacation of the throne of the Punjab and asking him to rush at once, to secure the throne and further assuring that he himself had unilaterally decided to act as the Prime Minister. The Raja also ensured that relays of horses were posted on the way from Lahore to Kahnuan to speed his journey to the capital. On hearing the news, Kanwar Sher Singh collected his force and rushed towards the Capital, with the quickness of the wind and lightening, where he reached early in the morning of Sunday, November 8, 1840. Sher Singh, having made his appearance, the death of the royal prince, kept secret for three days, was made public by the crafty Prime Minister.

Dhian Singh Dogra then ordered Lal Chand, the *vakil* of the deceased Kanwar, to inform Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur that she should come alongwith the ladies, to see the light of her retina. Hearing the news, she fell senseless. "She struck her head against the wall, resulting in severe injuries to her. She tore her garments and drowned herself in the ocean of worry and disgust. She soon rode in a chariot, alongwith the other ladies to burn alive and proceeded towards the Fort, weeping and wailing all through. She went into the Fort and made such wailing and mourning into the octagonal

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tower, where the dead body lay, and wept and shed tears, beating her chest with her hands and pulling her hair that the surface of earth could not tolerate it." The Raja, who could wait for three days for Kanwar Sher Singh, without disclosing the death of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, did not allow even three hours to the Queen Mother to be with her only child who met a tragic end in the prime of his life.

Rival Claims for the Throne

The death of the Maharaja and the Kanwar, within a few hours of each other, caused a crisis of unparalleled magnitude in the Lahore Darbar. Dhian Singh Dogra was fully conscious of the behind-the-scene activities of the supporters of the Mai Sahiba or the rivals of the Dogra family. On November 11, 1840, all of a sudden, the Sardars and the faithful Chieftains pronounced that one of the widows of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh being pregnant, Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur was to be the mistress of the State of Punjab till an heir was born to Rani Sahib Kaur Gillwali and demanded that Mai Sahiba be accepted as Regent during the pregnancy. Hearing this, the earth slipped from under the feet of Kanwar Sher Singh. He was inclined, to reconcile Mai Sahiba to his being her Regent, but she wished him to quit Lahore and return to his *Jagir* at Batala, so that she might hold the reins of the Government herself. The rival parties now engaged themselves in browbeating each other. Negotiations and discussions between the two warring groups in the Court of the Late Maharaja led to the formation of a co-regency of Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh for the short period of the pregnancy of Rani Sahib Kaur Gillwali. Dhian Singh Dogra, who wanted to gain power for the Kanwar, initiated the proposal and the supporters of the Mai Sahiba found in this proposal a tacit admission of the facts of Rani's pregnancy. Shortly thereafter, Attar Singh Sandhanwalia arrived at Lahore by forced marches on November 12, 1840. At the instance of Mai Sahiba, Lal Chand (nephew of Sohan Lal Suri) went to Jammu with great haste and brought Gulab Singh Dogra to her aid. He advised Dhian Singh Dogra to keep back, for the time, from helping and assisting Kanwar Sher Singh and to postpone the handling of the affairs for the while, as it was not known who would be alive? It will be very interesting to note here the part played by the Jammu Rajas in the existing struggle for power between Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur and Kanwar Sher Singh. There should be no doubt about the fact, recorded Barkat Rai Chopra[37] that, as usual, the Jammu Rajas were all of one mind and they had one and only one end in view. All of them were in favour of Kanwar Sher Singh in whom Dhian Singh Dogra was interested. In such like struggles between different parties at the Darbar, it was the usual policy of the Jammu chiefs to follow a well concerted policy in order to serve their interests. They would lead the opposing parties, so that whichever side might win, their interests, *Jagirs* and influence would remain

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safe.

Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur now formed a strong faction, headed by the headstrong Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia and sought modification of the existing arrangements for Government to assume sovereign powers. On November 20, 1840, she was proclaimed as Regent, having the Chief authority, and Kanwar Sher Singh was made the vice-regent. Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur unreservedly opposed Kanwar's prominent position under this arrangement and the danger of clash between the two factions increased daily. Dhian Singh Dogra then came forward with another proposal to appease the Mai Sahiba. On November 27, 1840, an agreement was drawn up to the effect that the Kanwar would retire to his estate in Batala-Mukerian till the birth of a child to Rani Sahib Kaur Gillwali and, if she bore a son, he would be acknowledged as the heir, otherwise a new agreement would be drawn up. Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur was to remain the Regent.

One day, Dhian Singh Dogra was going towards the private apartments, when the guard stationed by Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia barred his way. This led to an exchange of abuse between the Dogra and the Sandhanwalia. Mai Sahiba supported the Sandhanwalia and thus made it clear to the Dogra Raja that he was no longer to consider himself *Deoridar*. He felt that time had come to install Kanwar Sher Singh on the Throne. He employed himself energetically, but covertly, to create conditions favorable to his design. He lost no opportunity in rendering Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur unpopular among the Sardars and the troops. False rumours were spread of character assassination of the Mai Sahiba. The Raja was ultimately deprived of the control of the Army and some of the troops mutinied. The troops were ready to topple the Government of the Mai Sahiba but, according to Nur Ahmed Chishti,[38] Dhian Singh Dogra probably preferred that the troops should fulfill his intentions by declaring themselves, in his absence. Thus, he wanted to be temporarily away from the scene and to arrive at the moment when the two factions required him for intercession and he would be able to demonstrate his ability to convince his protégé that the Throne was gained by him through his aid. With that end in view, he asked Mai Sahiba for permission to leave for Jammu for a month.

On January 2, 1841, Dhian Singh Dogra, accompanied by his younger brother, Suchet Singh Dogra, left Lahore for his home in the estate of Jammu, of course, leaving his son, Hira Singh Dogra and brother Gulab Singh, behind to watch Dogra interests in the Court. On his way to Jammu, Dhian Singh Dogra issued several letters to the army officers and other attendants of the *sarkar,* asking them to present themselves at once before Kanwar Sher Singh as soon as he might reach Lahore.

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Sher Singh Marched to Lahore

Dhian Singh Dogra now sent a communication from Jammu to Kanwar Sher Singh at Batala that the time was ripe for his proceeding to Lahore where the troops were ready to receive him. This declaration of the Raja, according to Nur Ahmed Chishti,[39] was confirmed by the arrival of secret agents from the army, pledging the troops to support his claim, on the condition he gave them a certain amount of donatives, which was specified in a written agreement. Mohd Naqi,[40] recorded that the prince was inundated with letters of invitation from officers of the army, which convinced him of their sincerity. Sohan Lal Suri[41] mentioned that even some of the Counselors and *vakils* and other reliable persons sent him letters pointing out their readiness to offer him welcome. So, the Kanwar gird up his loins to take over power from the feeble hands of the cantankerous widow and, without waiting for the birth of a child to the Gillwali princess, dispatched a letter to the British Agent at Ludhiana, informing him of his intentions. On January 12, 1841, on Wednesday, Kanwar Sher Singh left Village Kahnuan, at the head of an army of deserters, covered the stages of journey in great haste and, on the morning of January 13, 1841, encamped on the site of Budhu Ka Awa, outside the city of Lahore. In a short time, the Kanwar had 26,000 infantry, 8,000 horses and a park of artillery comprising 45 guns in his train. The report of Kanwar's arrival at *Budhu Ka Awa* completely unnerved Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur, and a great deal of hue and cry and noise spread all over the Capital.

Siege of Lahore by Sher Singh

Dhian Singh Dogra, Chief intriguer, did not turn up in aid of Kanwar Sher Singh or at the call of Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur. Gulab Singh Dogra did not want the success of Kanwar Sher Singh without the active support of Dhian Singh Dogra and he, in pursuance of a deep rooted conspiracy with other members of the Dogra family, made great effort to check the Kanwar from gaining the throne till the arrival of Dhian Singh Dogra, an ally of the Kanwar. Now, troops after troops deserted the camp of Mai Sahiba. Chiefs and European officers also joined the Kanwar in no time. Encouraged by these defections and the desire to gain the throne, the Kanwar thought of attacking the Fort, without waiting for Dhian Singh Dogra.

On the early morning of January 16, 1841, the whole city was in a state of uproar and commotion. The enraged soldiery plundered all the principal bazaars. Before day break, Kanwar Sher Singh was the master of the principal parts of the city. After taking possession of the Hazuri Bagh, the besiegers turned their attention towards the Fort. The volley of fire by the besiegers completely stunned the besiegers and the besieged. A terrible fire was then opened and the Kanwar had summoned Gulab Singh Dogra to surrender. The Dogras, on the walls and ramparts of the Fort now

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promptly opened fire with their muskets and, in about ten minutes, the Hazuri Bagh was cleared of the besiegers. During the confusion, Kanwar Sher Singh escaped from the Hazuri Bagh back to his former quarters in the barracks of Mewa Singh, but he could not forget his claim for the throne. He had, on January 15, 1841, written to Dhian Singh Dogra to return from Jammu at once and to restrain his Dogra brother in the Fort from opposing him and his army. On hearing this, he at once rode from Jammu. On the evening of January 17, 1841, the news reached Lahore of the arrival of the Dogra Raja from the Jammu hills. Escorted by the troops sent by the Kanwar and 500 of his own followers, the Raja made his entry into the city, accompanied by Suchet Singh Dogra. On meeting Dhian Singh Dogra, Kanwar Sher Singh actually humbled himself so far as with bare feet and joined hands to entreat forgiveness for what was past, which he declared again was not through any fault of his. Kanwar Sher Singh made a strong bid to capture the Fort. Bhai Ram Singh, a strong supporter of Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur, made a representation to him that the garrison be permitted to come out with honours but the Kanwar replied that all the Sardars and the Mai Sahiba should die in order that there remained none to oppose him. All the events, before and after the arrival of Dhian Singh Dogra, were enough for the partisans of Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur to realize that their fate was almost sealed. She wrote a letter to her seeming ally, Gulab Singh Dogra, to settle the affairs quickly. While the Mai Sahiba was anxious to terminate the hostilities forthwith, Dhian Singh Dogra, on reaching Lahore, sent a message to his elder brother, Gulab Singh Dogra, for stopping the fight, assuring him that the Kanwar would not interfere while he would be evacuating the Fort. He was asked to set the mind of Mai Sahiba at rest by holding out assurance to her that her interests and her reputation would be guarded and protected. Dhian Singh Dogra thus achieved his end. His elder brother found little difficulty in inducing Mai Sahiba, the prey, to agree in the views and designs of himself and his younger brother. Thus ended the short rule of the Mai Sahiba in the Punjab and Kanwar Sher Singh was proclaimed the Maharaja of the Punjab.

On the morning of Thursday, January 20, 1841, Kanwar Sher Singh with chosen troops occupied the Fort of Lahore. The first thing Dhian Singh Dogra did was that Gulab Singh Dogra and Hira Singh Dogra were reconciled with the new Maharaja. Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur remained within the Octagonal Tower in the charge of Baba Bikram Singh Bedi. Gulab Singh Dogra made an unsuccessful bid to take her and her daughter-in-law, Rani Sahib Kaur Gillwali, to Jammu to use them and the heir to the throne born to the latter at some convenient moment, but the Maharaja did not allow him to do so, and she was bluntly told to leave the Palace and retire to her house in the city. She then left the *Summun Burj* and the Fort of Lahore, where she used to live with great dignity during the lifetimes of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Kharak

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Singh and Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, a period of three generations.

Stage Set for her Murder

While the two Sandhanwalias, Attar Singh and Lehna Singh, had been conspiring against Maharaja Sher Singh from without, Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur had been busy in her hostile activities from within and the Maharaja was watching the whole situation closely. He, however, grew unpopular from his inability to meet the demands of the troops and, naturally, the scale was tilting towards the Mai Sahiba, whose influence was increasing day by day. The Maharaja now perceived that, so long as this ambitious woman lived, he could not feel secure. She had already, at the instigation of the Dogras, scornfully rejected his offers of marriage, which exasperated the Maharaja to the extent that he thought of finally disposing her of. The version in *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*,[42] was that the Maharaja consulted and conferred with Dhian Singh Dogra, Prime Minister, about this matter whom he told that so long as the destruction of the Mai Sahiba would not take place, he could never feel his mind at rest and assured of his kingship of Lahore. The Maharaja then reminded him of his past relations with him and sought his active help in steering clear his way. Dhian Singh Dogra was already on a look-out for an opportunity to destroy Mai Sahiba. Dhian Singh Dogra then proposed that the Maharaja should leave Lahore towards Wazirabad and Sialkot for pastime and hunting, while the sincere well-wishers would engage themselves in carrying out successfully the said work in union with Mahan Singh, *Nazim* of Lahore, and certain other persons. Accordingly, with most of his Chiefs and a large force, he marched to Wazirabad on May 14, 1842, leaving his faithful Prime Minister behind to commit the heinous crime. Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur had earlier shifted to her residence in the city but she was compelled to take up her abode again in the Fort of Lahore, of which Mahan Singh was incharge, to facilitate the Dogra Prime Minister and his gang to achieve the desired object. Dhian Singh Dogra prepared Mahan Singh to destroy Mai Sahiba. Under orders of the Maharaja, Budh Singh Mehra and his brother, Dewa Singh Mehra were already appointed to keep strict watch and guard over Mai Sahiba. Mahan Singh, then held a conference with Ichhra Singh Mehra, who was always ready to render services and was quite willing to abide by the orders of the Maharaja, his master, promptly. Then, in privacy, he invited Hiro Ganji, Assu, Pheri or Bhari Mochan and Hasso, the four maidservants of the State, from Fatehgarh Churian and told them the mission of the Maharaja and his servants, and the promise of a *Jagir* of Rs. 5,000/- to each of them on condition of their carrying out his scheme.

Murder Perpetrated

On June 8, 1842 the wretched maidservants made Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur,

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drink poison in place of rose-water and willow-water by filling it in a bottle and during the darkness of the night, they broke the head of the "head of ladies" into pieces, with successive blows with stones. They were now taking pride in destroying the existence of their mistress, little knowing that everlasting misfortune and bad luck awaited their own end. Hours before sunrise, this sad news spread like wildfire. Dhian Singh Dogra pretended that he did not know the incident, although the rumour spread that Mai Sahiba had been tortured to death at the instance of the Prime Minister and the Maharaja. He immediately took stock of the situation, straightway attended on the unfortunate lady, had her wounds examined and dressed by Faqir Nur-ud-din, and the slave girls were made prisoners. Mai Sahiba remained rolling in the bed of indisposition for two days and expired early in the morning of June 12, 1842. Dhian Singh Dogra immediately got the bier prepared, made Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur lie straight on it, took the platoons along with himself to show her respect and honour and, riding upon an elephant, showering gold on the way, cremated her near the Anarkali, in the garden of Mai Nakkain, the mother of Maharaja Kharak Singh.

Dhian Singh Dogra at once wrote a letter to Maharaja Sher Singh informing him of the manner in which Mai Sahiba left this mortal world, and invited him to reach Lahore soon. Sohan Lal Suri[43] recorded that, on hearing this news, the Maharaja felt very much pleased and at once reached Lahore on June 21, 1842. In a desperate bid to save him, his Dogra clan and the Maharaja, Dhian Singh Dogra proceeded to punish the assassins of Mai Sahiba, and had their noses, ears and hands cut off publicly in Lahore. They were turned out of the town with great disrespect and dishonour. Their tongues, however, were not mutilated, and they had related the circumstances under which they had been tempted to commit this horrible crime at the instance of the Maharaja and his Prime Minister. They were ultimately banished to the other side of the river Ravi, where they expired. The Prime Minister succeeded, though for a while, in proving his worth to the Maharaja in removing from the scene his powerful foe. On reaching Lahore, the Maharaja bestowed royal favours and kingly consideration upon Mahan Singh *Thanedar* and Ichhra Singh Mehra. He never hesitated in telling that he was responsible for this tragic event and incautiously acknowledged that he was the author of the Rani's death. Having been informed, shortly before his assassination, Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia was conspiring against him, he declared that, if he found this to be true, he would put him to death, "as he had done with Chund Kour."[44]

Sandhanwalia Sardars Reconciled

The Sandhanwalias were already busy in overthrowing the Maharaja and his Prime Minister in order to regain power and it added to the enmity of the Sandhanwalias who felt greatly incensed at this brutal act. They, however, felt convinced that they

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would not succeed in their mission in direct confrontation with them and decided to change their old tactics radically by resorting to diplomacy, to achieve their end. So they showed inclination for reconciliation with their most hated foe and had ultimately succeeded in their design, of course, at the cost of their own lives, when the open-hearted Maharaja also fell into their snare of deceit and perfidy. As Sher Singh gained the throne with the active help of Dhian Singh Dogra, the latter naturally wanted to keep him obliged to himself and be guided by his advice. The Maharaja, also now wanted to reduce the authority of the Dogra Raja with the support of the Sandhanwalia Chiefs and welcomed them. Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh Sandhanwalias soon took their accustomed places at the Court. The Sandhanwalias presented themselves before Maharaja Sher Singh, and secretly told him that they were his loyal subjects and also brethren in caste, religion and family and, as such, they could not refrain themselves from putting him on his guard against the machinations and evil designs of Dhian Singh Dogra. Simple minded Maharaja was informed that they had been deputed by the Dogra Raja to assassinate him on the promise of a fat *Jagir* of sixty *lacs* of *rupees,* and that minor Dalip Singh would be placed on the throne, with the assurance that they would act as his Regents and the Dogra Raja would be an ostensible Minister. The Maharaja felt convinced of the evil designs of his Prime Minister and they got the '*Firmaan*'[45], exonerating them from all the liabilities attending the crime and went straight to the mansion of Dhian Singh Dogra and, in secrecy, exhibited to him his death warrant, signed by the Maharaja himself. The Raja, already in search of an opportunity to do away with the Maharaja, gladly gave the green signal for the assassination of his master, promising great rewards to them in the event of their successfully carrying out their mission. The Sandhanwalias also had a document executed by the Raja, authorized them to put an end to the Maharaja's life, and obtained his signatures on it. Fully armed with the documents, they took leave and, on the next morning, they left for Raja Sansi.

Maharaja, Prince and Dogra Minister Murdered

On September 15, 1843, the Sandhanwalias returned with a well-armed chosen cavalry to Shah Balawal, where the Maharaja was sitting in a chair before the window of a small room. Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia, with a chosen party, dismounted and entered the mansion, made his obeisance to the Maharaja, who received him with a free and courteous air, being totally unconscious of the coming storm. He was still reclining easily in his chair when the Maharaja asked the Sardar to deliver him the gun for inspection, on which he handed it over to the Maharaja, and fired both barrels almost together. The Maharaja fell back in his chair, corpse, the only words he uttered before he breathed his last being "*Eh ki dagha kita*?" (What treachery is this?). Lehna Singh

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Sandhanwalia, with some soldiers had gone over to the nearby garden of Jowala Singh Padhania and, with one stroke of the *kirpan,* chopped off the head of the Kanwar from his body. Both Sandhanwalias hurriedly repaired towards the city, which was in a state of commotion. Ajit Singh met the Dogra Raja who was proceeding towards Shah Bilawal with a few followers and informed him that the job assigned to them was done. He was then taken to the Lahore Fort. According to J.D. Cunningham[46], the hitherto wary minister was now caught in his own toils, and he became the dupe of his accomplices. The Raja was moving up the ascent towards the throne chamber, side by side with the Sardar, while the latter asked the Raja what arrangements he intended to make. The Raja replied: "Dalip Singh shall be Maharaja, I Wazir, and the Sandhanwalias shall enjoy power." In his extremity, the Raja would not promise the Ministry to one of the Sandhanwalias. The Sardar asked the Raja as to who got his sister-in-law, Mai Sahiba Chand Kaur, murdered? This was a bold hint to the Raja to realize that his life was in danger. The Sardar then put a question regarding the Regency of the young Maharaja (Dalip Singh), to which he did not receive a favourable reply.

The Sandhanwalia Sardars had already sent for Bhai Gurmukh Singh Priest and Misr Beli Ram, the deadly foes of the Raja, inside the Fort. In *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, the author,[47] recorded that they "held a conference and consultation with the words that now they must take up the administration and control of the pontific because it was for that very day that they had destroyed the foundation of the life of the King and added that, so long as the foundation of the existence and life of Raja Sahib would not be destroyed and annihilated, it would be difficult and impossible for them to carry on the control and administration of the affairs of Kingship, while, with his death and demise, they would have full authority in their own hands and they alone would prove sufficient for the management of the affairs of the Kingdom and proposed that in whatever way could, they must destroy the life and body of Raja Sahib." The Bhai told the Sardar, in colloquial language, thus: *Jaddon lota nawan liya te phir karchha purana rakhan da ki matlab*, meaning, when a new Maharaja had to be placed on the throne, it was no use retaining the old Minister. The Sardar then crooked his finger as a signal to the man behind the Raja and, immediately, he received a shot from behind, discharged from a large rifle and fell dead. He received another shot and was soon cut to pieces. Thus, ended the rule of Raja Dhian Singh Dogra, which he had assumed after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in the Kingdom of the Punjab.

Hira Singh Dogra Quenched Thirst

The painful news of the fate of Maharaja Sher Singh, his son Kanwar Partap Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra soon spread like wildfire amongst the inhabitants of Lahore. The share taken by the Dogra Raja in the murder of the Maharaja was cleverly

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suppressed and the Sandhanwalia Sardars were regarded the sole perpetrators of the triple murder. Hira Singh Dogra alleged that the Sandhanwalia Sardars were in intrigue with the British to hand over the Kingdom of Punjab to them and had excited their cupidity by holding out promises of reward and higher pay. G.C. Smyth[48] gave a graphic description of Hira Singh Dogra's address to the troops on this occasion thus:

> "I was brought up from my infancy by the great Maharaja Runjeet Singh, as his adopted son, and I am now about to be slain as my father has this day been by the Scindanwallas, who have murdered your King, and his Minister, my dear father. And now listen, soldiers, they have done all this only because while they were in Hindostan, they made traitorous alliances with the British. They then agreed to do all this that has this day been done to call in the British and to deliver the country into their hands. In pursuance of this purpose they have, since this morning, sent off ten or twelve expresses in the direction of Ferozepur and Ludhiana to inform the British authorities of their success here; and now if some bold and energetic steps are not immediately taken by you, you will before three days have passed, hear of forty or fifty thousand British troops having crossed the Sutlej. If the British come and obtain their purpose, they will disband the entire Khalsa army. Yes! You will be compelled to give up your arms, and to go every man to his home. Your invincible power, your great and glorious name, will be lost in oblivion, and disgrace will be your lot. You will, moreover, be so impoverished that you will have to seek, and seek in vain, an ignoble maintenance from the plough! Soldiers, if you avert this humiliation, listen to me. The old King's coffers are yet full, but believe me, I have no occasion to resort to them; my own, my father's and my uncle's wealth is sufficient to keep up an army of a hundred thousand good and loyal Seiks for a hundred years, and I here solemnly promise that it shall, all to the last fraction, be expended on you. It is all yours and for your use. Now I here solemnly promise, and if necessary will confirm my word by an oath, that henceforth your pay shall be increased; one-half-each foot soldier shall receive twelve rupees a month, and every horseman one rupee a day. Listen to me, follow my instructions, and by one unananimous effort, we will not only secure our country from danger, and ourselves from disgrace, but will also punish the Scindawallas for their treason and cruelty – the traitors to their race, religion and country – the murderers of their prince and of his Minister!"

This was enough for the mercenary soldiery and they would listen no more. The Army responded to the call of the Dogra Raja and received his proposition with loud applause. The city was then occupied by the Dogra Raja, Hira Singh, and the troops laid a siege to the Lahore Fort from all sides. Soon, the Fort was occupied by the

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Dogras. Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia was first slain, his head cut off and the trunk of Sardar dragged into the mansion set apart for the flooring. The severed head was taken to Hira Singh Dogra and Alexandra Gardiner later placed the same at the feet of the widow of Dhian Singh Dogra. At the funeral pyre, she held the head and exclaimed, "Now I am fully satisfied. Now I am ready to follow my lord and husband," and addressing Hira Singh Dogra said: "I will tell your dear father that you have acted the part of a brave and dutiful son." Shortly thereafter, a shot hit Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia from behind and he fell dead. His head was also severed from the body. Nur Ahmad Chishti,[49] the eye witness of this melancholy incident, personally saw the dead bodies of Ajit Singh and his uncle, Lehna Singh, and of Mehr Ghasita, without heads, being dragged by ropes, tied with their legs, through the city of Lahore. Then, corpses were cut into pieces and hung on the different gates of the city. The Raja then went to the royal garden and ordered for the murder of every relative of the Sandhanwalias. The Raja, burning with spite, seized all the property and *jagirs* of the rebel *sardars* in the Sikh Kingdom as well as those held by them in the Cis-Sutlej region. Under orders of the Dogra Raja, the Sandhanwalia Forts and dwellings at Raja Sansi in Amritsar district, except those of Sardar Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia, were razed to the ground. The house of Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia was destroyed and it was decreed that thenceforward his lands should be no longer ploughed by oxen, but with asses.

Bhai Bir Singh Protected Sikh Chiefs

Bhai Bir Singh, a Sikh saint of great spiritual reputation, had served as a soldier, under Nihal Singh Attariwala in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He became a devotee of the Gurus and was greatly venerated by the peasantry. He set up his headquarters in village Naurangabad and opened a free kitchen where about 1,500 persons were fed everyday. His charity and devotion to religion made him so popular that hundreds of people visited him daily to receive his blessings. He was, however, suspected by the Dogras of spreading revolutionary ideas amongst the civilian population and the soldiery. Hira Singh Dogra wrote to the Bhai, asking him to deliver up or at least send away the "evil-minded people" who had joined him. The Khalsa troops were feeling agitated over the highhandedness of the Dogra in dealing with the princes and other Chiefs. Reminders were sent to the Bhai by the Dogras on February 18, and April 18, 1844, urging him to give up the "rebellious" people who had fled to him for protection. Then on April 21, 1844, the Agent presented a rescript, addressed by the Bhai's to the Raja, requiring that if the Raja wanted restoration of the peace and order in the country and his co-operation and support, fair demands of the Sikhs should be accepted, which included the release of Misr Beli Ram's brothers, punishment

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of the fanatic Sheikh Imam-ud-din and restoration of the estates of the Kanwars. The Raja, however, gave evasive replies. Hira Singh Dogra had emerged victorious, and Attar Singh Sandhanwalia had fled across the Sutlej to the British territory. The Sardar was in close touch with the Punjab affairs although he was putting up at a long distance from Lahore. The disaffected parties, like Kanwars Kashmira Singh and Pashaura Singh, were also in communication with him. Learning this, Hira Singh Dogra had earlier ordered, on February 4, 1844, that all of his rivals be traced and produced before him. Lehna Singh Majithia had accordingly left Lahore on March 13, 1844, met the Sandhanwalia Sardar at Thanesar and had instigated him to join the Kanwars and Bhai Bir Singh. On the early morning of April 27, 1844, Attar Singh Sandhanwalia left Thanesar and on May 2, crossed the Sutlej, a few miles below Ludhiana and joined the camp of Bhai Bir Singh at Sarhali.[50] As soon as the Sandhanwalia Sardar arrived in the camp of Bhai Bir Singh, he welcomed him and condoled with him on the death of his brother and nephew and remarked that the throne of the Punjab awaited him. Attar Singh Sandhanwalia then wrote to Gulab Singh Dogra about his arrival in the camp of the Sikh saint and dispatched the letter by a special messenger. On hearing this, the Prime Minister issued orders that, in future, no person should supply the camp of Bhai Bir Singh with grains, the breach thereof to be met with adequate force and penalty. The Sandhanwalia's presence in the Punjab, in the Bhai's camp, made the Dogra Prime Minister ready to take the strongest action against all of them. He visited the cantonment and addressed the troops thus:

First, that the Sandhanwalias had left the Punjab at the time of the accession of Maharaja Sher Singh and, after making their arrangements with the British, they had tendered obedience to the Maharaja. Then they slew the Maharaja, his son and the Prime Minister and this *sardar* went back and conformed his engagements with the British;

Second, Sardar Jawahar Singh, having also made arrangements with the British, designed to take away the Maharaja from the Punjab;

Third, Raja Suchet Singh Dogra, having first entered into written agreement with the British, quitted the Hills to subvert the throne of the Maharaja;

Fourth, now Sardar Attar Singh Sandhanwalia had agreed to give a six-*anna* share of the revenues of the Punjab to the British and, having got permission from them, had returned to the Punjab to establish the rule of the British;

Fifth, Bhai Bir Singh was a *faqir* (devotee), he ought not to oppose himself to the Government;

Sixth, if the Khalsa was displeased with him, the Raja, they could assist the

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Sandhanwalia, but they must remember that, under the British rule, the sacred cow would be slaughtered; and

Seventh, a request should be addressed to Bhai Bir Singh to deliver up the Sandhanwalia Sardar, otherwise he himself would be punished.

The Raja felt elated when he found that the Khalsa was laid prostrate before him and remarked that the Sandhanwalia Sardar be first punished. The officers suggested that some persons be sent to the Bhai to persuade him to deliver up the Sardar or send troops to seize him. The Raja wanted the fidelity of the Khalsa to him and assured that he would place the child Maharaja, at the head of the army and march against the Sandhanwalia. A paper was drawn up and all the officers and others put their seals and signatures to it. The way was now clear; the Raja ordered the troops and the guns to be held in readiness to march. The Raja, in execution of his plans, started making war-like preparations for the reduction of the Sardar. The Lahore troops, by speedy marches, reached close to the camp of the Bhai and besieged the Bhai's camp on three sides, river Sutlej being on the fourth side, on the evening of May 6, 1844. In the attack, the first victim was the holy Bhai Bir Singh, who was uttering the blessed words of reciting the name of the Almighty, when one of his legs was nearly knocked off by a cannon-ball. Attar Singh Sandhanwalia, Jawahar Singh Nalwa and Kanwar Kashmira Singh, besides other Sardars, fell in the hand-to-hand fight which ensued. Diwan Baisakha Singh was captured alive. Four of the Sandhanwalia Sardar's principal followers, who attempted to escape across the Sutlej on an elephant, were killed by a shell which exploded in the *Howdah* in the middle of the stream. 600 men of Attar Singh and about 200 on the part of the Lahore army were killed in this action. About 200 men were drowned in attempting to escape for safety. The head of the Sandhanwalia Sardar was chopped off from the trunk and taken to Lahore as a trophy. When the struggle was over, Bhai Bir Singh was found breathing his last in exclamations against those of his own caste and creed. As soon as the Bhai breathed his last, his command was obeyed and, in the presence of a huge sea of humanity, his sacred body was ceremoniously drifted down into the river.

Reign of Terror by Misr Jalla

Misr Jalla, a household priest of the Dogras, was the tutor and guardian of Hira Singh Dogra who had deeply influenced his pupil's impressionable mind. Hira Singh Dogra had apparently reached the height of his power but he and the haughty Misr Jalla had made too many enemies. The Raja himself was nothing more than a tool in the hands of his designing and unprincipled priest and, prompted by sheer arrogance, the crafty Brahmin tried his best to crush every Chief, even the most powerful and respected among the Sardars and nobles with disdain.

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The Misr knew the weakness of his pupil in keeping the army satisfied. He hit upon the plan to replenish the treasury by realizing arrears from the fief holders and by increasing their annual tributes by one-fourth. In bringing about 'economy' in expenditure and increasing the revenue, he had spared none, and did not spare even the Maharaja, his mother and his maternal uncle, by impairing the Civil List to such an extent that they could not live in a style due to their rank. On June 22, 1844, he reprimanded Attar Singh Kalianwala[51] who had taken his seat near him in the Darbar and ordered a *Farrash* and a *Bhayya* to make the Sardar sit at distance from him. The *Sardar* was chafed and seeing that the Darbar was now reduced to that of the *Paharias* left alongwith Bhai Ram Singh and Sham Singh Attariwala exclaiming the Sikh greeting '*Wah-i-Guru-Ji-Ka-Khalsa, Wah-i-Guru-Ji-Ki-Fateh*' in displeasure and disgust, but this protest hardly produced the desired effect on the crafty Misr. The latter got Bur Singh Mehra not only imprisoned but also got him beaten on January 3, 1844, to cause him to give up money which he possessed. On July 2, 1844, the Misr got Rai Mool Singh, flogged publicly in the *Darbar*, requiring him to pay five *lac* of *rupees* for instigating Suchet Singh Dogra against him and Hira Singh Dogra and to point out the property left by the Jamadar and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. On July 31, 1844 he insisted that the house and shops of Bhai Gurmukh Singh at Amritsar be razed to the ground. Fines were imposed on various Chiefs at his sweet will. On January 6, 1844, General Kahan Singh Majithia was fined Rs. 10,000 for allowing Misr Ram Dass to escape and Misr Rup Lal, Misr Ram Kishan and Misr Sukh Raj, brothers of Misr Beli Ram, were also fined Rs. 5,00,000/- on January 14, 1844. On March 1, 1844, Diwan Hakim Rai[61] was ordered to present *Nazarana* of Rs.1,00,000/- on the pain of taking over the management of Rawalpindi from him. On March14, 1844, Misr Diwan Chand was, in default of payment of ten *lac rupees* as fine, put in confinement. On June 12, 1844, Rattan Chand Dahariwala was required to give some charity and he narrowly escaped by promising to pay half a *lac* of *rupees*. On July 7, 1844 Raj Rup, the *Kardar* of Bharatgarh was ordered to pay Rs. 50,000/- immediately and Rs. 35,000/- for the next month. On July 13, 844, the sons of a deceased merchant of Gujranwala were required to pay Rs. 7,000/-. On October 24, 1844, the *Kardar* of Amritsar and a servant of the late Maharaja were ordered to pay Rs. two *lac* each. Even the near relations of the Maharaja and the holy men were not spared. On August 17, 1844, *Sardar* Mangal Singh Sandhu, a brother-in-law of Maharaja Kharak Singh, was required to pay the mullet of Rs. 1,50,000/- in full. On September 1, 1844, Baba Ram Singh Sodhi, was fined Rs. 5,000/- on account of the affrays between the *Zimindars* of his village and those of other villages. On September 19, 1844, the relations of Baba Mehtab Singh of Kotli, near Sialkot, were fined Rs. 10,000/-, for the Baba had allegedly harboured Prem Singh, a confidential servant of the late Sandhanwalia *sardars*.

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These humiliations and fines were not considered sufficient. Confiscation of *jagirs* followed simultaneously. To give some instances, he seized the estates of Rattan Singh Garjakhia in January 1844. The villages held by the paternal aunt of late Maharaja Ranjit Singh in *jagir* were resumed in May 1844. In the following month, to reward Mian Labh Singh Panjgrain, the district of Shahpur, near Nurpur, granted to Sardar Desa Singh Majithia by late Maharaja Ranjit Singh as yielding Rs. 50,000/- annually, was seized in the absence of Lehna Singh Majithia. In early July 1844, the fort of Sisgarh, situated to the north of the Sutlej, was seized from Sees Kaur. On 11th August, 1844, the *jagir* worth Rs. 2,000/- given by late Maharaja Ranjit Singh to Baba Attar Singh of Sri Kiratpur Sahib was ordered to be confiscated. On August 17, 1844, when Suket Rani[52] died, not only her property valuing Rs. 30,000/- was confiscated, but a *jagir* of Rs. 5,000/- conferred on her brother by late Maharaja Sher Singh was also resumed.

Thus, Misr Jalla established a reign of terror in the Kingdom of the Sikhs. An oral word from the Misr's tongue was implicity obeyed from one end of the Kingdom to the other. Nur Ahmed Chisthi[53] wrote that Misr Jalla was not only extremely cruel but was of immoral character as well. In 1842, about a year before his death, Maharaja Sher Singh had married a teenaged girl, named Dakhno, the daughter of a Chang *Zimindar* of Jhujian near Lambagraon[54] and mother of Kanwar Shivdev Singh, who had to put up strong resistance to the Misr's advances. He immediately confiscated her estates, allowing her only a bare subsistence allowance.

To celebrate the day of *Sankrand,* on December 13, 1844, as usual, Rani Jindan collected a number of articles, including pieces of gold and silver, to be given in charity and alms to the poor, to secure her son against misfortune, when Misr Jalla insolently threatened and grossly abused her, prohibiting her from performing the *Sankalp* and further threatening her to be imprisoned, if she insisted to carry on her wishes. Rani Jindan naturally felt slighted by an official of the Kingdom and started weeping and crying. All the Sardars, Chieftains, Officers and prominent men of the platoons unanimously determined to avenge the insult and destroy the Dogras and the haughty Misr. In the meantime, Misr Jalla made an unsuccessful attempt to poison Rani Jindan, under the pretext of administering to her medicine for a loathsome disease with which she was afflicted. When Jawahar Singh Aulakh, her brother, and the Sardars and soldiers learnt about it, their rage against the Dogra Raja and the Misr knew no bounds. Rani Jindan had, on previous occasions, complained that she and her son were virtual captives in the hands of the Dogras and the Maharaja was not permitted to be present in the Darbar, while the Raja and the Misr alone transacted state business. Sensing danger to his life and office, Hira Singh Dogra, promised to withdraw all restraint on the Maharaja and his mother, obliging the troops to quietly return to their quarters.

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Dogras at last Cut to Pieces

Tired of the events, Rani Jindan and her brother took the child Maharaja, to the cantonment and, in an impassioned speech, the Rani asked the soldiers to choose between her son, Maharaja Dalip Singh, and the Dogra-Misr regime. Immediately, they acclaimed Rani Jindan and her son, and swore to drive Hira Singh Dogra and Misr Jalla out of the Punjab. The Raja, finding himself in a precarious position, turned to his uncle for help, who hurried down from Jammu with a strong force of one thousand Dogras. On December 19, Hira Singh Dogra ordered for the confinement of Jawahar Singh Aulakh in his own house and prepared a plan to seize him with the help of his Dogra troops. In the meanwhile, the Raja and his tutor received a different intelligence, convincing them that the game was up, and they resolved to leave the city in pitch-dark, but their preparations and greed delayed them.

On December 21, 1844, with the mischievous counsel of Misr Jalla, the Raja, taking flight towards Jammu, loaded all the jewellery, cash and ornaments, on elephants and, at about 10:30 AM left his private house, attended by Misr Jalla, Mian Sohan Singh, Mian Labh Singh Panjgrain and others, with two to three hundred horse and foot. The Sikh army saw the Dogra Prime Minister taking to flight and, without wanting for the orders of their officers, gave him a hot chase. Hira Singh Dogra, opening his bags, scattered gold *Mohars* to divert the attention of the pursuing troopers by the hope of plunder but the Sikh Commanders called upon the troops to press forward, saying: "Slaughter the Pigs, don't let them go." Now six hundred Sikh cavalrymen, practically, pounced upon the Dogra party in the rear and on either flank, and proceeded more than two *Kos* from Lahore. Misr Jalla, now completely exhausted, fell from his horse and was immediately cut to pieces by the infuriated Sikhs. Hira Singh Dogra was wounded and was writhing with deep pain, when Attar Singh Kalianwala stepped up to him, but the Dogra Raja cast down his eyes after a glance at him. "Hira Singh," the Sardar accosted him, "Your sins are visited on yourself. The seeds of sinful poison sown by your father, have grown into a deadly crop that has destroyed all our government and our nation. Hurry up now to join him where he is." The whole party was then roughly cut down, with the exception of six private soldiers, who escaped the assault to tell the tale to Gulab Singh Dogra and the widows of Hira Singh Dogra.

Thus ended the stormy Ministry and the rule of the arrogant Dogra Prime Minister. His memory is preserved by the locality where he lived, being named after him as Hira Mandi. During the century-old British rule, this locality became the prostitute quarter of the Lahore city, but it was, Misr Jalla, the *eminence grise* of the Lahore Court, who led to his downfall. Misr Jalla's memory came to be execrated:

Upper Allah Thalley Jalla,
Jalley dey Sir tey Khalla.

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(In Heaven there is Allah, on earth there is Jalla. May He smack Jalla on the head with a shoe).

Jawahar Singh Aulakh Nominated Prime Minister Slaughtered

Gulab Singh Dogra had already laid the foundations of the Dogra Dynasty, in Jammu and Kashmir, with large territory and resources at his command. He wanted to conciliate the Sardars, especially Sham Singh Attariwala and, therefore, favoured Jawahar Singh Aulakh as the Prime Minister. Although Jawahar Singh Aulakh had ultimately succeeded in his object, much uneasiness was being caused, in the meantime, due to the intrigues of Gulab Singh Dogra, by Kanwar Pashaura Singh who had raised the banner of revolt. To get rid of his rival for ever, Jawahar Singh Aulakh dispatched a battalion of his new levies against the Kanwar, who was later captured and cut into pieces in the Fort of Attock on August 30, 1845. The leaders of the expedition sent this news to Lahore. Jawahar Singh Aulakh, made the dastardly crime an occasion for rejoicing. "The ramparts of the Fort," wrote Mohammad Latif,[55] thundered forth a salute and the city was illuminated at night." As soon as the news of the treacherous murder of Kanwar Pashaura Singh, reached the ears of the Khalsa,[56] the troops and the officers felt greatly excited, with horror and indignation and there was a voice "Kill Jawahar Singh", at the instigation of Mian Pirthi Singh Dogra. In fact, Gulab Singh Dogra, who long thirsted for the blood of the Sikhs, especially Jawahar Singh Aulakh, had invited Mian Pirthi Singh Dogra and his Rajput comrades to Jammu and instigated them thus:

> Jawahar Singh is a foolish and ignorant person. Hira Singh Dogra died with such a disgrace by his hand. Twice or thrice, he attempted on my life, but by the grace of the real Protector, I escaped with life. In whatever way you may, you should go and join the people of the platoons and destroy the foundation of his existence and fix up something by way of reward for sepoys of the platoons in view of that service.

The Dogras had, accordingly, reached Lahore with other Rajputs and faithfully executed the plan of their master. On September 21, 1845, the Army brutally murdered the Prime Minister in the presence of his sister, Maharani Jindan and her son, Maharaja Duleep Singh. Raja (Misr) Lal Singh then became the Prime Minister of the Sikh Kingdom.

Traitors At Work

Major George Broadfoot was bent upon winning over the high-ups and Chiefs of the Lahore Darbar, and Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Tej Singh and Misr Lal Singh had agreed to act as the agents and spies of the British Government. When the army Panchayat took the affairs of the State into their own hands, 'they maintained for a

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while wonderful order at Lahore and through their *Panches* exercised an almost puritanical discipline in the military republic….'.[57] A democratic revolution came about in the Sikh army only after the murder of Jawahar Singh Aulakh and, of this, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, both Misrs, were very much afraid. They exerted their efforts to induce the Chiefs to come in collision with the British. Henry Hardinge wrote to the Home authorities, on September 30, 1845:

> "While they (the army) declared that they desired peace, there was a strong party clamorous for war". "The Chiefs Lal Singh and Tej Singh urged them on to war."[58]

Rani Jindan was not in favour of war but the advice of the Rani and many of the Sardars was contemptuously disregarded[59]. The Sikh army were taken in by the instigations of the traitors, who themselves were evidently doing this at the bidding of Major Broadfoot and his Assistant, Captain Peter Nicholson. Forgetting all patronage and lavish favours he and his family received from Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh Dogra had already succumbed to the promises of territory in the Hills made by the British[60]. Commenting on the character of this brazen-faced traitor, Henry Havelock wrote in the year 1846:

> If a painter sought to employ all the smooth cunning of Asiatic intrigue in one face, he would throw away his sketches as soon as he saw that of Gulab Singh, cease to draw on his imagination and limn the features of Rao Sahib, as the Lahore people call him, with fidelity.[61]

Thus, these Brahmins and the Dogra Chiefs were in constant and secret correspondence with the British, keeping them fully informed of the movements at Lahore and later in the battlefields. The last encounter at Aliwal had taken a heavy toll of the Sikh armament and the initiative passed out of their hands to the enemy. Still the British had learnt about the 'toughness' of their adversaries, the valiant Khalsa, and reinforcements of men and officers of known repute were immediately called for from all over British India. All this time Gulab Singh Dogra, who could have brought forty thousand men by a mere sign of his finger, was being vainly implored by the Sikhs to aid them, but he had a difficult and critical game[62] to play. The army even offered to make him the Maharaja and to kill the arch traitors, Lal Singh and Tej Singh. Fortunately, for the British, he did not throw his lot with the Sikhs and went a step further than the two Misrs. He remained at Jammu cajoling the whole of the leading *Panchayats* of the Sikh army, affecting to see eerie visitor from the battle at any moment, whether he be bathing or eating, as if his whole heart was with the Sikhs. He got all the wheat-carriers in the country, loaded them with immense display with about one-fourth of what they could carry, put placards in *Gurmukhi* on their necks to the effect that they were carrying supplies from Gulab Singh Dogra, telling them under pain of mutilation, not to go too abreast, in order that the army and the country

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might imagine that incessant and enormous supplies were being forwarded to the devoted Khalsa by their loyal and affectionate friend. "I'm not going empty-handed to the great campaign that is to end at Calcutta," gave out Gulab Singh Dogra." However, no provision reached the battlefields. The Khalsa army had traitors to lead it at the front and traitors in the rear to stab it in the back.

Coming out in his true colours, Gulab Singh Dogra, leaving his Jammu abode, arrived at Lahore and reproached the Khalsa for striking their heads against a powerful neighbour without adequate planning and leader of their own choice. Henry Lawrence, a friend of the Dogra Raja, was then posted as British Agent at Ludhiana and the Dogra Raja opened negotiations with the enemy through his agent, Anant Ram, tendering his allegiance, in return for a solemn guarantee for his hill possessions. Henry Lawrence in a letter dated February 3, 1846, stated that the British appreciated that his interest would be taken into consideration.

Treaty of Peace March 1846

After the defeat of the Khalsa, mainly due to the treachery of their leaders, the British forces triumphantly crossed over the pontoon bridge at Ferozepur and the Fort of Kasur was occupied without opposition. Gulab Singh Dogra was then acceptable to the British, as he had also toed the line of treachery to his masters. Henry Lawrence sent the following note to Gulab Singh Dogra:

"Raja Sahib, Dear Friend,

Receive my regards and let it be known to you that I want to say a word which will be to your utmost good. So, I hope, you will manage to hear it personally. Do this please and do it without delay. I hope, you will remember me with your friendly letter.

Henry Lawrence.[63]

The fate of Rani Jindan, the infant Maharaja and the Sikh Kingdom was thus sealed. Fully armed with the authority of the Darbar, the Dogra took Faqir-Nur-ud-din and Diwan Dina Nath with him and tendered the submission of the Lahore Darbar to the British at Kasur. Three days later, the child Maharaja Dalip Singh was escorted by the Dogra Chief and Bhai Ram Singh to the British camp at Lulliani, between Lahore and Kasur to offer his submission to the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief. Acting as Master of Ceremonies for the Lahore Darbar, Gulab Singh Dogra said, "If my son or dearest friend were taken ill, I should immediately send for the most eminent physician, and throw the sufferers into his hands, request his advice, and make the patient swallow the physic prescribed. I now place the Maharaja in the hands of the Governor-General as that skillful physician. I know everything he will do with regard to him will be the best, and for his advantage." Sir Hope Grant, who was present at the meeting, wrote this oriental form of expression

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made by a person who had long been purchased by the British.

On March 9, 1846, the Treaty of Lahore was signed. Raja Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh dubbed by the Khalsa as the traitors, Bhai Ram Singh and Diwan Dina Nath all signed the Treaty on behalf of the Lahore Darbar. As the Darbar could not pay more than half a *crore* of *rupees* of the total war indemnity of one and a half *crore* of *rupees*, Hazara and Kashmir were taken away from the Sikh Kingdom and Kashmir was sold to Gulab Singh Dogra for an amount of one million pound sterling. Hazara was taken over by the British and the Dogra Chief was compensated with the territory near Jammu. The aforesaid figure of an million pound sterling was then reduced by one-fourth. Moreover, the Treasure of late Suchet Singh Dogra, estimated to be about 15 *lakh* of *rupees,* which was in the custody of British at Ferozepur, was also delivered to Gulab Singh Dogra, presumably as a bonus, for playing treachery with the Sikhs at the eleventh hour.

On March 15, 1846 Gulab Singh Dogra, who could only aspire to be the Minister of the truncated Kingdom of the Punjab, was invested with the title of Maharaja at Amritsar. He thus became the Maharaja of a state about the size of Italy. Thus, the *richh* (Bear) as he was known amongst the people, got the best honey out of the Darbar's honeycomb. He accepted the gift with due humility. He stood up, with folded hands, hanging shoulders and neck, and bent knees, and expressed his warmest gratitude to the Governor General for the honour done to him, adding that he regarded himself as his *Zarkharid* or gold-bought slave. On the following day, another ceremony took place at Amritsar, when the Treaty with Gulab Singh Dogra was ratified and the *Zarkharid* laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir, which was ruled by him and his few successors for one full century.

Avtar Singh Gill

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RELATIONS WITH MUSLIM CHIEFS

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Lahore in 1799 and started his claim over the sovereignty of the Punjab, the Muslim chiefs controlled larger area of the lower Bari Doab, Chhaj and Sindh Sagar Doabs. Kashmir, Peshawar and Multan states were directly under the control of the Kabul Government. Besides, Awans of Pind Dadan Khan and Sahiwal; Blochs of Khusab; Bamba Kakka tribes of Muzaffarabad; Nawabs of Bhakhar, Leiah and Mankera conquered by his father Maha Singh; Chathas of Rasulnagar; Ghakhars of Jhelum-Rawalpindi regions; Pirzadas of Pakpattan; Kasur in Bari Doab, Sials of Jhang and Tiwana Maliks of Shahpur too owed allegiance to the Kabul Government. The Muslim chiefs, like their counterparts, the Sikhs and the hill Rajputs, zealously guarded their autonomous position; indulged into a game of territorial aggrandizement; and formed alliances and counter-alliances cutting across their ethnic affiliations to face the rising Sukerchakia chief. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with his superior diplomacy, military strategy and powerful army, subjugated the Muslim chiefs and annexed their principalities. He also conquered the powerful states like Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar; and forced their rulers to recognize his overlordship and pay *nazrana* annually. Those Muslim chiefs whose principalities were annexed were given *jagirs* and they formed hierarchy of the *Sarkar-i-Khalsa*. Rest of them remained tributary chiefs and owed allegiance to Maharaja by paying the stipulated *nazrana* regularly. Simultaneously, Maharaja Ranjit Singh also enrolled the civil and military Muslim administrative personnel. In lieu of their services rendered to the Sikh *raj*, they enjoyed power and wealth of the state. Besides, there were a large number of *kardars*, *qanungos* and *patwarias*, *qazis* and *maulvis*; *chaudharis* and *muqadams* operating at the local level. The Maharaja allowed them to serve the state. It is to be noted that majority of the population of the Kingdom of Ranjit Singh comprised of the Muslim *zamindars*, farmers, *kashatkars*, *muzaras* and artisans, etc., etc.

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Purpose of this article is to examine the nature of allegiance of the Muslim chiefs and administrative personnel alone under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors (1799-1849).

I

Nizam-ud-din Hasanzai Qandhari Afghan of Qasur, was an immediate rival of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He requested Shah Zaman to appoint him governor of Lahore in 1799. On not being successful in his ambitions he tried to persuade the Muslim citizens of Lahore to recognize him as their chief in the same year. These citizens preferred Maharaja Ranjit Singh to be their chief instead of Nizam-ud-din. Nizam-ud-din made an alliance with Bhangi Sardars against Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1800. But this alliance failed in its object to dislodge Maharaja Ranjit Singh from Lahore. In 1801, Nizam-ud-din had to accept Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lordship and paid tribute to him. In the next year, he again rebelled but was defeated by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia on Maharaja Ranjit Singh's behalf, and forced to pay heavy fine and tribute. He was assassinated in 1802 and succeeded by his brother Qutab-ud-din Khan. The latter too rebelled against Maharaja Ranjit Singh and declared himself an independent ruler. He insulted Fakir Aziz-ud-din who approached him on behalf of Maharaja Ranjit Singh for accepting the Maharaja's over-lordship. In 1807, he excited religious passions of soldiers who claimed themselves to be *ghazis*, the Muslim crusaders. However, the Nihangs of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army battered the walls of Qasur and forced Qutub-ud-din to surrender. Consequently, Qasur was annexed. However, he was allowed to retain Mamdot territory about 400 square *miles* in the territory on the left bank of the river Satluj. Qutab-ud-din agreed to pay a nominal tribute and to serve at the head of 100 horsemen, whenever Lahore Darbar required. He served Maharaja Ranjit Singh during his several campaigns against Multan. Nevertheless, Qutab-ud-din sought British protection after the conclusion of Treaty of Amritsar (1809) but was declined. Subsequently, Mamdot was based out to Nihal Singh Attariwala.[1]

The Mamdot chiefs, though feudatories of Lahore Government, continued to raise nuisance for the Khalsa Darbar. They were fined in cases of loot and murder. Kutub-ud-din was fined Rs. 12,567/- due to his involvement in loot in 1824 and Jamal-ud-din Khan, collateral of Kutub-ud-din, was fined Rs. 11,100/- for murdering Soba Rao, the Lahore news writer.[2]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh subjugated small Kharal and Sial chiefs. Saadat Yar Khan II of Kamalia was defeated and granted a service *jagir* of 40 villages. The *jagir* was further reduced when his son Muzffar Khan succeeded. In 1804, Maharaja Ranjit Singh crossed the river Ravi, moved towards Ramnagar on the Chenab and then to Jhang. Ahmad Khan was its chief of considerable note, but easily submitted to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He acknowledged his supremacy and paid tribute. Next to

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him were Bloch chief Fateh Khan of Sahiwal and Kot Maharaja, who too acknowledged his supremacy offering 25 horses, and 25 camels as an annual tribute. However, in 1816, Maharaja Ranjit Singh again asked him to pay tribute. Unable to pay the stipulated amount, he was made prisoner and sent to Lahore. His entire territory was annexed which could yield about four *lakhs* of yearly revenue. Ahmad Khan's estate was farmed out to Lala Sukh Dayal for Rs. 1,60,000. Ahmad Khan of Jhang, who was kept under custody for nine months, was set free and awarded a small *jagir* for subsistence.[3]

Hafiz Ahmad Khan was a powerful chief of Mankera in Sindh Sagar Doab. In 1816, a Sikh detachment under Akali Phula Singh demanded a tribute from this chief and asked him to surrender forts of Khangarh and Mankera. On his refusal, the Sikh detachment occupied the two forts and ravaged his territory. Hafiz Ahmad Khan was forced to pay a handsome tribute, and the forts were handed back to him along with some portion of plunder. For five years, Khan paid *nazrana*. In 1821, Maharaja Ranjit Singh personally led a military contingent to Indus and forced Ahmad Khan to surrender the fort of Mankera. Ahmad Khan agreed to pay annual tribute and was allowed to leave Mankera for Dera Ismail Khan along with his personal belongings and contingent. For fifteen years, this Nawab remained as a vassal. In 1836, Prince Nau Nihal Singh crossed the Indus and the Nawab was made to surrender the rest of his territory. He was granted a maintenance *jagir*.[4]

In the middle of 18th century, Tiwanas established their independent principalities. Sher Khan Tiwana founded Nurpur Tiwana in 1745. He expired in 1767 and his two sons Khan Muhammad Khan and Khan Beg Khan quarreled with each other. With the help of Sial and Bloch chiefs, Khan Beg Khan took up arms against his elder brother, Khan Muhammad Khan in 1803. The latter got Maharaja Ranjit Singh's military help. Maharaja Ranjit Singh entrapped Khan Beg and handed him over to Khan Muhammad Khan who killed his brother. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took one *lakh* as the price of blood. In 1817, Maharaja Ranjit Singh attacked Ahmad Yar Khan to submit to his authority. The defeated chief was granted Jhawrian worth of Rs. 10,000/- in *jagir* and obliged to maintain 60 horsemen in the service of Lahore. Being impressed by the gallantry of the Tiwana, Maharaja Ranjit Singh took their 50 horsemen to Lahore and put them as his personal body guards under Qadir Bakhsh, son of Ahmad Yar Khan.[5]

The Awans of Rawalpindi were known for their predatory temperament, and had helped Kabul army while Maharaja Ranjit Singh's commander Mohkam Chand was investing attack in 1813. The latter destroyed Shamsabad, headquarters of Awans. Maharaja Ranjit Singh restored the estate of Muhammad Nasir Khan as a *jagir*. When the later died, his brother Firoz-ud-din was allowed to possess this *jagir*.

The Gakkhars were another clan holding some territory around Rawalpindi. Before

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh, they had already been subjugated by Gujjar Singh Bhangi. Charhat Singh Sukerchakyia gave their possessions to his associate Milkha Singh. The latter captured larger area forming Pharwala to the sons of Muqarrab Khan who (Mansur Khan and Shadman Khan) divided Pharwala too in 1818. In 1826, Maharaja Ranjit Singh vested some proprietary rights to Gakkhars in Pharwala. Similarly, Nawab Jodrah's successor Ghulam Muhammad was allowed one-fourth of the revenue in *chaharam* (fourth part) of *illaqas* of Sil and Baba Gheb. He served Maharaja Ranjit Singh as his military *jagirdar*.[6]

Multan was one of the powerful Afghan strongholds. Located in the lower Bari Doab, this province comprised of Multan, Liah, Khangarh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Jhang. Its ruler was Muzaffar Khan, a feudatory of Kabul regime till 1809. In this year, he became an independent ruler. He maintained a rapport with other Afghan chiefs including Ahmad Khan of Jhang in the wake of military advances of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. From 1802 to 1818, Maharaja Ranjit Singh led military expeditions against this Nawab five times. Each time Muzaffer Khan tried to 'rouse the Muslim peasants with a cry of holy war against the infidels'. However, Nawab's strategy did not work. In 1805, he was forced to pay *nazrana* of Rs. 70,000/-, and in 1810 this *nazrana* was increased to Rs. 80,000/-. This Nawab was forced to shut himself in the fort of the Multan. By 1818, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made up his mind to annex Multan. Free from other political and military occupation, Maharaja Ranjit Singh made the comprehensive military arrangements asking feudatories and *kardars* to supply requisite military contingents. Under the command of Misr Diwan Chand and Prince Kharak Singh, 25,000 horses and foot soldiers along with strong equipment of seize guns were fielded. Muzaffar Khan was also determined to resist Maharaja Ranjit Singh's assault. He raised a cry of holy war and thereby sought the help of neighbouring chiefs. Having no response from them, he made a request for help from the British. The latter too politely refused. Nevertheless, Nawab gallantly defended the fort with 2,000 men, but fell down along with his two sons in a heroic combat. The city and fort were ravaged ruthlessly and a loot to the tune of Rs. 2 *crores* fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh's forces. Sarfraz Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, Nawab's sons, were given honourable treatment at Lahore. Sarfraz Khan was granted Sharakpur in *jagir* which was later confiscated after the grant of small pension. However, Maharaja Ranjit Singh remained courteous and friendly to Sarfraz Khan.[7]

Under the honest and proficient governorship of Diwan Sawan Mal, Multan enjoyed peace and prosperity. He maintained eight regiments of Pathans and two of Sikhs. He brought troublesome Blochis under control. Theft and robbery vanished. He gave liberal loans to *zamindars*; got constructed inundation canal (500 kms. long) and wells were dug to bring barren lands under cultivation. Reasonable assessment of

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land revenue further gave impetus to economic development. Trade and industry flourished: 300 quintals of raw silk was imported from Turkistan annually and 40,000/- meters of silk fabrics and two *lakh* meters of silk and cotton mixtures were manufactured every year. Multan was major trading centre of horses, money-changers (*shirofs*) and metal products. It became so prosperous that Diwan Sawan Mal gave Rs. 21,000/- from his own pocket, Rs. 50,000/- from the *zamindars*, Rs. 8,000/- from the *kardars*, Rs. 23,000/- from troops and Rs. 600/- from the bankers and merchants of Multan and Dera Ghazi Khan by way of *tambol* on the occasion of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh's marriage.[8]

When Maharaja Ranjit Singh thought of conquering Kashmir, it was held by Ata Muhammad Khan, a nominee of his predecessor, Mahmud, the ruler of Kabul. The latter also thought to replace Ata Muhammad and deputed his Wazir Fateh Khan. Joint enterprise of the Afghan and Lahore Darbar forces made Ata Muhammad flee from Kashmir. However, Fateh Khan subjugated Kashmir but did not give share in the booty to Diwan Mohkam Chand who led the Darbar forces in 1812. Towards the end of this year, Maharaja Ranjit Singh organized another campaign but had to abandon it due to heavy rains and snow. The next expedition was launched in 1814. Main body of the troops was led by Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself, while Ram Dayal commanded a section of the troops. Both of them had to retreat their respective forces due to indemency of the weather which played havoc in the rank and file of the army. Nevertheless, Kashmir was finally conquered in 1819. Two pronged attack was launched under the command of Miser Diwan Chand and Prince Kharak Singh. After some pitched battles, Afghan forces fled in disorder. Jabar Khan himself was among the wounded.

Conquest of Kashmir in 1819 ultimately supplanted the Afghan rule by the Sikh rule which lasted for more than two decades (1819-1846). It was a significant achievement in terms of military and commercial hegemony of Lahore Darbar. From 1819-1839, seven governors were appointed and replaced either on account of failure of sending back the stipulated amount of revenue to the royal treasury or of corruption or bribery. Prominent governors were Diwan Moti Ram 1819-20 and 1821-26; Hari Singh Nalwa 1820; Diwan Kirpal Ram 1827-31; Prince Sher Singh 1831-34 and Colonel Mihan Singh 1834-41. In the beginning, Sikh rule was welcomed both by Hindus and Muslims as it gave relief to them from the ruthlessness of the Afghans. Kashmiri Hindus were the major beneficiaries of the Sikh rule; cow slaughter was stopped; restrictions imposed on the Kashmir by the Afghan rule regarding worship, dress and some customs were removed. *Begar* was abolished. In socio-religious matters, Muslims were also given full freedom. Hari Singh Nalwa constructed gurdwaras at Kathi Darwaja, Srinagar, Mattan and Baramula in the memory of Guru Hargobind's visit. He also made some efforts to promote Punjabi language and literature. During Col.

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Mihan Singh's governorship, there were 308 poets and scholars. Among them 193 were Hindus and Sikhs; rest were Muslims. In 1835, Sikh population was estimated at about 5,000 comprising mostly of Sikh soldiers and civil employees.[9]

Lahore Darbar appropriated a huge amount of revenue. Moti Ram wished to raise this amount to the tune of Rs. 52 *lakhs* for the Darbar annually. Practically, it was not feasible. Hari Singh introduced the new currency which came to be called *Hari Singhia Rupaiya* (a silver coin) reducing its two-third value so that it could be at par with Afghan Rupee. However, he appropriated a huge amount of Rs. 25 *lakhs* which led to the closure of thousand shawl-manufacturing units. To give relief to the suffering people, Maharaja Ranjit Singh recalled Hari Singh and reappointed Moti Ram (1821-26). The latter implored the Maharaja to reduce the demand of huge amount of Rs. 52 *lakhs* as revenue as Kashmiris were unable to pay the same. It was slashed to 50%. Moti Ram also reduced the number of Sikh troops which was a further relief to the native people as well as state-treasury. He made efficient administrative arrangements by which he could collect total revenue to the amount of 22½ *lakhs* of Nanakshahi *rupees*. But, Maharaja Ranjit Singh insisted on payment of Rs. 25 *lakh*. The subsequent governors like Kirpa Ram and Prince Sher Singh had to remit the fixed amount.

Sher Singh's governance did not improve the condition of the people as his deputies Wasakha Singh and Jamadar Khushal Singh indulged in extortions and appropriated *lakhs* of *rupees* for themselves. Unfortunately, natural calamities like floods and famines too played havoc. In 1833, famine broke out. Thousands of people died of starvation. Srinagar lost two-thirds of its population by death and desertion. Colonel Mihan Singh (1834-41) tried to retrieve the position by abolishing duties on grain and poultry imports from Punjab, granting *takavi* loans liberally to the cultivators and punishing black marketers. Some efforts were also made to protect shawl-manufacturing units. However, extreme poverty continued in its frightening proportions. Nevertheless, the Sikh writers make us believe that under the Sikh rule, peace and prosperity prevailed, trade and manufacturing units flourished. Agriculturists and artisans, which were largely Muslims, became prosperous. The Sikh rule was a just one.[10]

Across the Trans-Indus lands, the Barkuzai chief, Fateh Khan held the whole of Peshawar. By 1810, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's military hegemony had been acknowledged up to the banks of Indus. Wishing to extend his hegemony to the natural boundary, Maharaja Ranjit Singh first entered into negotiations with Fateh Khan in regard to a venture into Kashmir and then with Wazir's brothers Ata Mohammad and Jahandar Khan. In a diplomatic coup, Maharaja Ranjit Singh got possession of fortress of Attock in 1813. Consequently, Wazir Khan, on being outwitted, decided to fight the Sikhs, but was defeated in a pitched battle at Haidaru. Five years later, Maharaja Ranjit

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Singh further took advantage of the vacuum of political leadership created in consequence of the murder of Fateh Khan. The Khalsa Darbar forces overran the valley of Peshawar. During 1821-1822, Ranjit Singh annexed Derajat, principality of Multan, under Abdul Sammand Khan.

Nevertheless, the Afghan chiefs were determined to over throw Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lordship. In 1813, Azim Khan, brother of the deceased Fateh Khan, mobilized the forces of other Afghan chiefs, fought a deadly battle of Naushehra and played havoc among the forces of Khalsa Darbar. The Sikhs too fought back gallantly and drove back the Afghan forces and entered the city of Peshawar, but Maharaja Ranjit Singh being a pragmatic ruler, again handed over this city to Barukzai brothers, who acknowledged Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lordship on the condition of paying tribute annually. However, the Khalsa Darbar lost one of its luminary, Akali Phula Singh in the Naushehra battle (1823). In 1827 again, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's lordship was challenged by Syed Ahmad Shah who declared *jihad* to extirpate the 'infidel Sikhs'. The Barukzai chiefs too thought of trying their luck again and joined the Syed's forces. Sandhanwalia put hundreds of Syed's followers to death. The Sayed himself fled to Surat. In 1828, he again came back to the Yusafzai's country, compelled the chiefs including Barukzais to accept his authority. In 1830, prince Sher Singh routed his forces and killed the Syed at Balakot. Subsequently, several military campaigns were launched to ensure Afghan chiefs' subordination. In 1834, Dost Muhammad declared himself Amir of Kabul; arrived in the Khyber and was able to persuade Afridi Maliks to join his *jihad* against the Sikhs. But, again Hari Singh Nalwa's forces foiled Dost Muhammad's plans and pushed him back to Kabul. It was Nalwa's ruthless use of military force that ensured the Afghan subjugation. For instance, to keep Yusafzais under awe, he levied a cess of Rs. 4 per house, which was to be collected either in cash or kind. In case of inability to pay this cess, personal household property could be confiscated. It is said that there was hardly a village which was not burnt. His name instilled fear and terror in the mind of people. The Afghan mothers used his name to hush their unruly children.

In 1837, Dost Muhammad sent Afghan forces under his sons near Jamrud. Assaults and counter assaults between Afghan and Sikhs forces resulted in a great loss of human life on both sides. The Sikh forces held their position so long as Hari Singh Nalwa was there to provide intrepid leadership. His mortal injury dispirited the Sikh forces. However, the Afghan forces were kept at bay till the arrival of reinforcements. General Avitabile's governorship, after Hari Singh's death, was able to firmly establish Maharaja Ranjit Singh's sway in the trans-Indus lands.[11]

II

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Immediately, after Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, his successors and courtier indulged in the politics of self-aggrandizement and consequently factions surfaced in the Darbar-i-Khalsa, which involved the tributary chiefs, *jagirdars* and administrative personnel. There was frequent change of allegiances. The shifts in the Muslim allegiance were no exceptions in such a situation. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was succeeded by his eldest son Kharak Singh in 1839. However, his succession was contested by his stepbrother Sher Singh. Intervention of powerful *Wazir*, Dhian Singh Dogra, resolved the crisis for some time. But, the struggle for supremacy between Chet Singh Bajwa, a close confidant of Maharaja Kharak Singh, and Dhian Singh culminated into the elimination of Chet Singh Bajwa. Meanwhile, Kharak Singh's son Prince Nau-Nahal Singh, left Peshawar for Lahore and, in connivance with Dhian Singh, took over the control of state affairs. Consequently, Maharaja Kharak Singh was forced to retire from active administration. The equilibrium of power got seriously disturbed by the death of Kharak Singh and Prince Nau Nihal Singh in November 1840.

Consequently, administrative control of the Lahore Government slacked and situation in far off North-West region grew unruly. The Afghan chiefs of this region regarded the Sikhs as 'usurpers and, with Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, these chiefs hoped to throw off the yoke of Lahore Government'. Painda Khan of Darband in Hazara, whose *jagir* had been forfeited by the Lahore Government, ravaged the countryside and seized the fortress of Kishangarh from Sikh commandants and forced the government to restore back his *jagir* in 1840. Lawlessness also broke out in the country around Hassan Abdal. The chief of Gandgarh defied the authority of the Lahore Government. Sardar Chattar Singh Attari, who held a *jagir* in Hazara, could restore some semblance of law and order in that region. Laxity in the control of central government also gave rise to insubordination among the troops posted in the far off places. Mihan Singh, governor of Srinagar, was hacked to pieces by the troops. Similarly, Major Ford at Hazara was murdered in 1841. General Avitabile had to flee from Peshawar and take shelter at Jalalabad. Diwan Sawan Mal, governor of Multan, narrowly escaped the wrath of his troops.[12]

Death of Kharak Singh and his son in mysterious circumstances polarized the courtiers into two major factional groups. Sher Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son, was put on the throne by Dhian Singh. He was supported by his faction comprising of Dogra brothers, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala, Faqir brothers and some European officials. Chand Kaur, Kharak Singh's widow, contested Sher Singh's claim. She was supported by the Sandhanwalia chiefs, Bhais Ram Singh and Gobind Ram and other *sardars*. After the capitulation of Chand Kaur, Sher Singh ascended the throne. For the time being, Sandhanwalia Sardars' influence was extinct and Dhian Singh Dogra remained in the centre stage of power. However, Maharaja

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Sher Singh leaned towards Sandhanwalia *sardars* who enjoyed the British support. This contest for power eventually culminated in a civil strife and led to the triple murder of Sher Singh, his minor son and Wazir Dhian Singh by the Sandhanwalia *sardars* in 1843. Conseqently, minor Dalip Singh occupied the throne with Maharani Jindan, his mother as his regent. Wazir Hira Singh, son of late Dhian Singh, and several other courtiers came to the centre stage. From 23rd July, 1843 to December, 1844, Hira Singh successfully used the Khalsa army against the Sandhanwalia *sardars*, but eventually himself became the victim of its wrath on 21st December, 1845. By this time, Khalsa army had become mutinous. In the next round, Maharani Jindan used army against Gulab Singh Dogra to drive him out of Lahore. However, the latter saved his life by manipulating the situation in his favour. Meanwhile, Jawahar Singh, Rani Jindan's brother, became Wazir on 14th May 1845. His *wazarat* lasted only four months, but before that, he got Peshaura Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son, eliminated. In retaliation the '*panchas*' of Khalsa army declared him a traitor to the Sikh Raj and put him to death on 21st September, 1845. Now, the coterie comprised Maharani Jindan, Lal Singh, new *wazir* and Tej Singh, a commander of the Khalsa army, sought the destruction of the army and conspired with the British to attack Lahore Kingdom. Eventually the first Anglo-Sikh War was fought which ended in the defeat of the army. Nevertheless, one of the common features of the contest for power was that each successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and also the courtiers approached the British secretly to secure their respective positions.[13] They had come to believe that the British were supreme and the ultimate authority to follow.

At the end of the first Anglo-Sikh War, Lord Hardinge, the British-Governor-General of India, imposed two treaties on the Sarkar-i-Khalsa: first was concluded on 9-11 March 1846 at Lahore and second in December 1846 at Bhairowal. By the first treaty the British annexed "all forts, territories and rights" – in the Jalandhar Doab and the hill territory situated between the Beas and the Indus, including the provinces of Kashmir and Hazara. The territory was given as reward to Raja Gulab Singh, who was got proclaimed by the Sikh Maharaja, as sovereign ruler. Besides, the strength of the so-called 'mutinous troops of the army' was drastically reduced.[14] By the second treaty, the entire Sikh Kingdom was transformed into "a virtual British protectorate: its administration was to be directed and controlled by the British Resident who became head of a new Council of Regency of eight members and the British army was stationed at Lahore. Maharani Jindan was pensioned off. This treaty was to terminate on 4th September, 1854 when Maharaja would attain the age of sixteen."[15]

It is very obvious that the treaties of Lahore and Bhairowal entitled the British to intervene in the Khalsa Darbar's political and administrative affairs more effectively. Now, they could directly deal with the Muslim chiefs and the people of their respective

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principalities and if warranted they could exploit religio-political antagonism between the Sikhs and non-Sikhs. Moreover, the British intervention aroused anti-British sentiments among the Khalsa veterans and transformed the factional politics of the Lahore Darbar into pro- and anti-British factions. The British manipulated the non-Sikhs chiefs, particularly, the Muslim chiefs, as we shall see, against the Khalsa veterans in the second Anglo-Sikh War. So it was this political scenario in which the allegiance of the Muslim chiefs eventually shifted to the side of the British Government.[16]

The Tiwana Maliks were the typical examples of this shifting allegiance. The Tiwanas were splendid horsemen and were "behind the Sikhs in all-round usefulness". However, in 1849, they "fought with conspicuous bravery on the side of the English."[17] A shift in their allegiance can be seen in the politics of one of their chiefs: Fateh Khan. He was a *jagirdar* near Dera Ismail Khan and follower of Raja Dhian Singh.[18] In 1837, Fateh Khan Tiwana became instrumental in the game-plan of Raja Dhian Singh. The latter wanted to appropriate revenue from the Kheorah salt mines. Despite reluctance on the part of Prince Nau Nihal Singh, Raja Dhian Singh promoted Fateh Khan as the in-charge of Kachhi country and the latter got opportunity to appoint his relatives as the *kardars* of Mianwal, Shaikhowal and Nurpur Tiwana. Fateh Khan let some successful campaigns against the Allahabad Khan, the governor of Tank. Wazir Hira Singh, son of Raja Dhian Singh, suspected Fateh Khan's hand in the murder of his father. Fateh Khan fled across the Indus to Bannu. He mobilized Muslim tribes to pick up arms against the Lahore Government and ravaged the country. After the fall of Hira Singh, another Dogra Wazir, and Pandit Jalla, he became favourite of Jawahar Singh, who appointed him governor of Mitha Tiwana country, portions of Jhelum and Rawalpindi and the whole of Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu, superceding Diwan Daulat Rai, an appointee of Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself. Jawahar Singh was opposed by Pashaura Singh, another son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Pashaura Singh was in possession of a fort of Attock. Jawahar Singh, a protégé of the British, deputed Fateh Khan and Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala to march against Pashaura Singh. They dispossessed Pashaura Singh of Attock Fort and imprisoned the Prince. Fateh Khan, as per directions of Jawahar Singh, strangled the Prince to death.[19] For sometime, Jawahar Singh kept the news of Pashaura Singh's death a close secret, particularly, from the *Panchayats* of the Khalsa *Fauj*. But when the *Panchayat* came to know the fact, they retaliated and killed Jawahar Singh.[20] When Jawahar Singh was killed by the Khalsa *Fauj*, Fateh Khan again crossed the Indus and took possession of Dera Ismail Khan and eliminated his rivals in a cold-blooded manner. He tried to get immunity by bribing Raja Lal Singh and Maharani Jindan. However, he was chased by the forces of Daulat Rai but remained far from being suppressed.

By 1846, Fateh Khan developed rapport with the British Government and

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supported Lieutenant Edwards and Major H. Lawrence in their campaign in Kashmir. On his way back to Lahore, Diwan Dina Nath found him defaulter to the amount of Rs. 7 *lakhs*. He refused to pay back the amount and was imprisoned along with his son Fateh Sher Khan. Meanwhile, Multan rising took place. Lieutenant Edwards thought of Fateh Khan's military relevance in suppressing that rising and got him released from the jail in 1848.

Fateh Khan fought a number of military combats against the Sikh forces which were led by Sher Singh Attariwala, son of Sardar Chatter Singh Attariwala; a Khalsa veteran. Fateh Khan was able to mobilize several Muslim tribes in the Multan country. However, along with his supporters, he was taken as prisoner in the siege of Dalipgarh fort and remained prisoner till the Sikh forces were defeated by the British in the battle of Chillianwala. After the annexation of the Panjab, Fateh Khan and his collaterals were suitably rewarded by the British by way of huge revenue – free *jagirs* and pensions.[21]

The Muslim chiefs belonging to Gheba and Block tribes followed the footsteps of the Tiwana chief. Rai Fateh Khan Gheba of Kot (Rawalpindi) took advantage of factional politics of the Lahore Darbar and 'rose in revolt' but had to surrender before Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala in 1846. After sometime, he again raised the banner of revolt. This time Colonel Lawrence's influence induced him to yield. As a result, he fought against the Sikhs without being guilty of treason. "During the war of 1848-49, he proved to be of great service to Captains Nicholson and Abbott. He kept ready the communications and raised a large body of horses and foot, and on several occasions he engaged parties with success."[22] Subsequently, he rendered loyal services to the British during the uprisings of 1857 and was suitably awarded by the British with revenue-free *jagirs*.

Malik Langar Khan, Bloch chief of Sahiwal, served Lahore Kingdom under Maharajas Ranjit Singh and then under his son Sher Singh and led an army contingent whenever he was asked to. After Sher Singh's assassination, Raja Hira Singh too despatched him against Fateh Khan Tiwana who ravaged country between the Chenab and the Indus. However, under Jawahar Singh the new *wazir*, 'he did good service against the insurgent Bhai Maharaj.'

"For three days and nights, from Jandiala to Jhand did Langar Khan with other Muhammadan chiefs land on his tracks till, being joined by the fresh troops of Misr Sahib Dayal, they drove the rebel forces into the swollen Chenab. Two months afterwards, Langar Khan joined General Whish's camp at Sirdarpur, and served during the whole siege of Multan with great credit. On annexation, his personal *jagirs* worth Rs. 3,000/- were released in perpetuity, a pension of Rs. 1,200/- was granted to him which was resumed after his death on 17th March, 1853."[23]

There were several 'Maliks' and 'Khans' belonging to the Khattar, Awan, Ghakhar

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and Gheb Chib, and Khokhar tribes who 'resisted the Sikhs as long as they could' but submitted to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's might and served the Lahore Darbar as subordinate vassals. However, they shifted their loyalty from time to time under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's successors and *wazirs*. But they ultimately responded to the allurements of the British residents and generals, particularly towards the outbreak of the first Anglo-Sikh War. They believed that British were going to be the masters of Punjab. Important among these chiefs were Malik Fateh Khan Drek (Khattar), Muhammad Hayat Khan of Wah (Khattar) in Rawalpindi, Malik Firoz-ud-din Khan (Awan) of Shamshabad of Pind Dadan Khan, Raja Karam Dad Khan Ghakhar of the Rawalpindi district, Raja Fazl Dad Khan (Chib) and Raja Sultan Ahmad Khan (Khokhars) of Pind Dadan Khan.

However, it is not suggested that the process of shifting allegiance was smooth and uniform. Some of the Muslim chiefs remained loyal to the Sikh *raj* and fought on the latter's behalf against the chiefs of their own tribes and then against the British in the first Anglo-Sikh War. For instance, Rai Muhammad Khan, a descendant of the Gheb tribe in southern part of Rawalpindi, was defeated and granted a *jagir* by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He fought against the Maliks of Pindi Gheb on a number of times. However, Rai Muhammad distinguished himself in a battle which was fought against Sayed Ahmad who declared *jihad* against the Sikhs, and for his services received the village of Giro, worth Rs. Two hundred. However, the Sikh *nazims* including Sardar Attar Singh Kalianwala found it difficult to control Rai Muhammad Khan who was ever ready to rebel. He was killed by Budha Khan Malal, an old enemy of his family, probably in connivance of Kalianwala Sardar.[24] His son Fateh Khan took revenge from his father's killer and then rebelled against the Lahore Government in 1845-46, but was brought under control by Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala. Subsequently, he shifted his allegiance to the British. Similarly, Gulam Muhammad Khan, a descendent of Jodrah Muslim tribe holding territories of Sil and Bala Gheb, accepted over-lordship of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and fought under Attar Singh and Budh Singh Sandhanwalias against Sayed Ahmad Khan. But he was killed by his rival and enemy Rai Muhammad Khan. His son and successor, Allah Yar Khan, shifted his allegiance to the British and rendered good services to Captain Nicholson and Lieutenant Edwards and Taylor in 1848-49.[25]

Alienation of the Muslim chiefs and *jagirdars* in general and risings against the Lahore Darbar particularly suited the British scheme to create disaffection among the adversaries of the Sikh raj in the post-first Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46) period. This scheme would, as the British calculated, lead to chaos and anarchy which could be projected as the pretext to annex the kingdom of Lahore. As noted earlier, they had already got control over the Afghan polity in the trans-Indus region and 'Maharaja' Gulab Singh of Jammu and Kashmir Kingdom was their own creation. Now, they

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thought that if Multan province could be lopped off, it could lead to the disintegration of the Sikh kingdom. Politics of self-aggrandizement played by Lal Singh forced Mul Raj, governor of Multan, to pay *nazrana* of a *crore* of *rupees*. "Mul Raj at the same time was embarrassed by disaffection in the Sikh portion of his troops, who, in November 1844, (instigated, it was believed, by the Lahore Darbar) broke into open mutiny, demanding higher pay."[26] After suppressing the mutineers, Mul Raj agreed to pay Rs. 18 *lacs*. Meanwhile, Raja Lal Singh, an old enemy of Mul Raj, became Wazir of Lahore Government, sent an army forcing Mul Raj to pay the stipulated amount of *nazrana*. He paid this amount but Dogra Wazir unjustly took away the districts of Liah and Jhang. Mul Raj felt humiliated. In December 1847, Mul Raj tendered his resignation which was accepted by Sir Frederick Currie, the new British Resident at Lahore. When, on 19th April, 1848, Kahn Singh Mann, governor designate, accompanied by two British officers, P.A. Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson, took charge from Mul Raj, his troops revolted, killed the two British Officers and held Mul Raj as a prisoner. But Mul Raj became a symbol of Sikhs' discontent and they rallied round him to strike against the British.[27]

The British allowed this situation to deterioate further. When it assumed threatening proportions, it gave an opportunity to the British to despatch armies of the Lahore Government by different routes to Multan. Sheikh Imam-ud-din's forces and forces of Jawahar Mal Dutt mainly comprised of Muslim soldiers. Right from his stay in Kashmir, Sheikh Imam-ud-din had become a close confidant of the British generals. In fact, Sheikh Imam-ud-din and his father Ghulam Mohi-ud-din were corrupt and amassed huge wealth as collectors of Jalandhar. With the decline of Lahore Government, the Muslim chiefs in the Kashmir valley were ready to help Sheikh Imam-ud-din to re-establish the Muslim hegemony in the region.[28] Similarly, another army was to be supplied by Nawab of Bahawalpur who too had joined the British camp. Besides, in the sub-principalities of the Multan province across the river Indus, the British generals Edwards and Courtland had an advantage of the situation and exploited the anti-Sikh sentiments of the Pathans and Blochi tribes. These sub-principalities were Sangar, Dera Ghazi Khan and Harrand which were held by Chetan Mal and Longa Mal, deputies of Mul Raj. The British generals won over the trust of chiefs of above mentioned principalities. Important among them were Mitha Khan of Mangrota and Kaura Khan of Dera Ghazi Khan. Moreover, British used the influence of Sarfraz Khan, the eldest son of Muzaffar Khan, inducing the Multan Pathans to abandon the cause of Mul Raj.[29] Similarly, the British used the support and influence of Mukhdum Shah Mahmud, guardian of shrines of Baha-ud-din, to mobilize his followers to their sides. Consequently, these chiefs and their forces played a significant role in suppressing the rising at Multan.[30] On the other hand, Mul Raj and deputies

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could not keep their rapport with the Pathan and Blochi chiefs due to their preoccupation with the military affairs in Multan town. Moreover, the Pathan soldiers who formed an important component of forces of Mul Raj had developed antipathy towards the Sikh raj. 'Mul Raj attributed the failure of his army to the treachery of his Pathan soldiers.' Similarly, Sheikh Imam-ud-din who mustered 4,000 Muslim soldiers had already switched over his loyalty to Major Edwards.[31]

The 'Hazara episode' (1848) too exposed the British policy of exploiting socio-religious and racial antagonism between the Sikh administrative personnel and the Muslim chiefs and their tribal forces. Sardar Chatar Singh Attariwala was appointed governor of Peshawar in 1846 and shifted to Hazara in 1847. Captain James Abbott, his political advisor, alleged that Chatar Singh was hatching a conspiracy to subvert the British power and inciting dissent among the Sikh soldiers in the wake of Multan outbreak in 1848. He charged the *sardar* with treason and a similar report was sent to the British Resident at Lahore. In order to contain Chattar Singh and his Sikh soldiers, James Abbott raised Pathan levies, and called upon them to destroy Sikh Sardars and Sikh soldiers. He marched towards Haripur. At this juncture, Commodore Canora, an artillery officer in the fort, 'who was in secret communication with Captain Abbott, refused to move his battery' when Chattar Singh asked the Sikh soldiers to encamp near the fort. It was alleged that Commodore was shot down at Chattar Singh's order. Enquiry instituted by the British Resident himself found Chattar Singh not guilty in the Hazara incident. Inspite of that, Resident Fredrick Currie 'issued orders which amounted to Chattar Singh's dismissal and confiscation of his *jagirs* which drove him to open defiance. The Hazara revolt now escalated into hostilities between the British and the Sikhs.'[32] Chattar Singh established communications with the Sikh contingents posted at Bannu, Kohat, Tonk, Peshawar and Attock. The contingents rebelled against the British and joined Chattar Singh. Meanwhile, Sher Singh, son of Chattar Singh, "when he heard about his father's humiliation, left the British camp, went over to Mul Raj first and then moved northwards to join his father at Hazara. Sher Singh's actions set into motion chain of events which set the whole of Punjab ablaze. From across the Ravi and from the Sind Sagar Doab multitudes of disbanded Khalsa soldiers swelled his ranks. Overnight he became leader of Sikh resistance. He proclaimed himself a servant of the Khalsa and that of (the Sikh) sovereign and called upon the people to rise in arms and expel the British from their country.[33] On the other hand, British too proclaimed the war and Lord Sir Hugh Gough, Commander-in-Chief crossed the Ravi on 16 November 1848 with 24,000 men and 65 guns.

Meanwhile, in October 1848, Major H. Edwards wrote to Ismail Khan, an old chief of Jhang and getting a pension of Rs. 60, 'directing him to raise troops on behalf of Government.' Complying with this direction, Khan raised troops and defeated

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Atta Muhammad, a rebel chief at Nikokarah. "Afterwards, when Sirdar Sher Singh Attariwala had passed through Jhang and had left Deoraj in command of 1,000 men there, Ismail Khan attacked the detachment several times, with varying results...."[34] In fact by this time, as noted earlier, several Pathan and Blochi chiefs had become British allies in wars against the Sikhs.

Subsequently, battles at Ramgarh, Chellianwala, Sadullapur and Gujrat were fought. At Chellianwala, both father and son worsted the British on 13th January, 1849. But ultimately, British overpowered the Khalsa veterans and they were made to surrender on 14th March, 1849.[35]

III

The allegiance of Muslim civil and military personnel to the Sikh state was more durable as compared to the Muslim tributary chiefs and *zamindars*, for the obvious reason that these personnel were appointees of the Maharaja. Their loyalty to the king and work according to the satisfaction of the king were prerequisites for sharing power and wealth of the state. King's displeasure meant transfer, demotion and even dismissal from the job. Moreover, they came from those families whose traditional calling was professional job and were trained to obey the master. Nevertheless, service conditions too determined the tenure and degree of allegiance. So long as Maharaja Ranjit Singh remained a fountainhead of the state, their allegiance remained intact. No sooner the state polity fragmented, their allegiance too got divided. Quick succession after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and factional politics of the Darbar forced the Muslim administrative personnel either to quit the Lahore Darbar or to remain in low-key and wait for the emergence of new masters.

Under the Sikh state, the number of the high Muslim administrative personnel was marginal as compared to their Sikh and Hindu counterparts. However, at the lower rung of the state structure, the number of petty officials including *qazis*, *kardars* and *qanungos*, was larger. If *chaudharis* and *muqadams* were to be included, their number further increased, but may not be to the proportion of their population.[36]

Among the prominent Muslim administrative personnels, Faqir brothers: Aziz-ud-din, Nur-ud-din and Imam-ud-din were at the top rung of state structure. The ancestors of Aziz-ud-din had originally migrated from Arabia but, before entering the Punjab, they had for a time lived for sometime in Bukhara, and were, therefore, known as Bukharis. Moreover, the father of Aziz-ud-din has added the prefix *Faqir* to his name ever since he became the disciple of a saint. '*Faqir*' began to be used as a family title after their father's death, by Aziz-ud-din and his two brothers. At the time of the conquest of Lahore by Ranjit Singh (1799), they were residing in that city; Aziz-ud-din being a pupil of Haqim Rai, a well-known physician of Lahore. Soon after, he was

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engaged by Ranjit Singh as his medical advisor. His advice, however, was not limited to matters of health, but personal and private matters as well. However, the intelligence and sagacity of Aziz-ud-din induced the young chief to seek his opinion on political affairs likewise.[37] From 1808 to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the *Faqir*, like Dhian Singh, exercised a great influence in Maharaja's council and rendered valuable services to the Sikh sttate. Nevertheless, after Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, Aziz-ud-din's allegiance underwent a change. He took no active part in the political intrigues that followed the death of his master and his influence began to decline when people saw him leaning towards Raja Dhian Singh and his party, as if he believed that they alone could save the state from disruption.[38] Sheikh Gulam Mohi-ud-din was another notable officer of the Sikh state who was trained to look after state affairs. His father Sheikh Ujala of Kalal tribe, was a *Munshi* in the service of Sirdar Bhup Singh of Hoshiarpur. His son, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din, when very young, attracted the attention of Diwan Moti Ram, son of the celebrated general Mohkam Chand, who placed him in attendance on his second son, Shivdayal. Here, he soon became a man of importance, managed all the affairs of Shivdayal, whose two brothers, Ram Dyal and Kipra Ram, also favoured the young man and advanced his interests.[39] In 1823, Sheikh Ghulam Mohi-ud-din was assigned very delicate diplomatic mission by Maharaja Ranjit Singh on the recommendation of Kirpa Ram. Maharaja Ranjit Singh wished that Afghan army under Azim Khan of Kabul should leave Peshawar without fight. Mohi-ud-din successfully prevailed upon Azim Khan through his *pir* (spiritual master), to go back to Kabul. Similarly in 1827 he performed the duty as an agent of Kirpa Ram who was appointed governor of Kashmir. He also worked in the same capacity under Prince Sher Singh in 1831-32. However, he committed excesses on the people and appropriated revenue in *lakhs*. Maharaja Ranjit Singh confiscated the whole of his property and fined Sheikh, Rs. 25,000/-. Nevertheless, he became a favourite of Prince Nau Nihal Singh who was appointed governor of Peshawar and worked as his chief fiscal officer. He manipulated this position through his contacts with influential courtiers. In 1839, he was appointed governor of Jullundur (now Jalandhar) Doab.[40]

In the post-Maharaja Ranjit Singh period, Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din changed loyalty from one successor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to another and from one factional group to another. When Kharak Singh and his son Prince Nau Nihal Singh expired in 1840, Ghulam Mohi-un-din took support of Mai Chand Kaur, wife of Kharak Singh, but when Sher Singh succeeded in occupying throne he shifted his loyalty to the new king and successfully convinced the new king to appoint him as the governor of Kashmir. During his tenure, he acted as governor of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra rather than of Lahore State. Gulab Singh's ambition was to grab the Kashmir province. For two years (1844-45), Gulam Mohi-ud-din performed a tough task of controlling the Muslim

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insurgents against the Sikh State. "In February 1845, Sheikh Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din tried to open negotiations with the English Government, to which he tendered his allegiance, and that of Raja Rahimulla Khan of Rajaori. His proposals were rejected, and soon afterwards he died, it is believed, from posion, and his son Imam-ud-din Khan, who was in Kashmir at the time, succeeded as governor."[41] Sheikh was unscrupulous and a manipulator and his allegiance wavered from one faction group to another. It was towards the end of his life that he shifted his allegiance to the British. It was his son Imam-ud-din Khan, however, who did not take long time to shift his allegiance to the British. "In 1848, with 2,000 newly raised troops, he marched to Multan, to cooperate with the force of Lieutenant (now Sir Hebert) Edwards. Both he and his men behaved well, and distinguished themselves in several actions with the rebels."[42] When peace was restored, he received, as a reward for his life services, the title of Nawab, and a life cash pension of Rs. 11,600/-, and a *jagir* of Rs. 8,400 was confirmed to him.[43] Thus what father wished for towards the end of his life, son fulfilled that wish.

Nevertheless, there were several Muslim military personnel who were loyal to Maharaja Ranjit Singh and led many military campaigns on behalf of the Lahore Darbar against their co-religionists.[44] A few of them even laid down their lives. But majority of them changed their allegiance towards British, particularly after the first Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46). Among such personnel were Chatha *jagirdars* who served in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and after his death became loyal to the British. Mirza Ghulam Murtaza entered the army of the Maharaja and performed efficient service on the Kashmir frontier and other places. In the post-Maharaja Ranjit Singh period, he faithfully performed his duty till 1848. But, by this time he changed his allegiance and fought on the side of the British against Bhai Maharaj Singh, an old Khalsa veteran. He was awarded *jagirs* and pensions by the British.[45]

The following inferences can be drawn from the preceding text. First, the Muslim chiefs resisted Maharaja Ranjit Singh's hegemony and owed allegiance upon the might of military spectre of his state. Payment of *nazrana*, of course, was a formal allegiance to the Maharaja. But, most of the Muslim chiefs were reluctant to pay the *nazrana* annually. Use of force for extracting *nazrana* showed how superficial their allegiance was. In fact, till the ejection of these chiefs from their respective principalities, their allegiance was temporary. Second, the principalities of Qasur, Jhang, Sahiwal, Pind Dadan Khan, Mankera, Multan and Bahawalpur were subjugated from 1816 to 1821, whereas the principalities of Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Tonk and Banu were made to submit between 1831 to 1836. Till their subversion the Muslims were tributary chiefs. The administrative intervention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's government in the first case was for two decades and in the second case less than a decade, as

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Maharaja expired in 1839. Moreover, even after their submission some of these chiefs rebelled against the Sikh *Raj*. Third, those Muslim chiefs whose principalities were annexed, they became *jagirdars* and owed their allegiance to Maharaja as their status depended upon his will. There was hardly any *jagirdar* who dared to challenge Maharaja's suzerainty. Similar was the position of the civil and military Muslim personnel. As they were his appointees, they were loyal to him. Fourth, it was in the post-Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period that we notice a perceptible shift in the allegiance of Muslim chiefs as well as the administrative personnel. This shift was essentially due to instability that came in the wake of quick succession after Ranjit Singh, on the one hand, and politics of self-aggrandizement indulged in by the factions of the courtiers, especially the Dogra chiefs and Sandhanwalia *sardars,* on the other. The Muslim chiefs, like their counterparts, lost the fear of king's authority. They ceased their allegiance when civil strife broke out after Maharaja Kharak Singh's death. They seriously damaged the state control over the *nazims*, and *kardars* as well as the *jagirdars* and *zamindars*. Moreover, the unbridled power of Khalsa army comprehensively supplanted the civil authority. Fifth and last, the British intervention was the principal factor that encouraged frequent change of courtiers and administrative personnel. After the first Anglo-Sikh War, the British had full control over polity of the Kingdom of Lahore. They won over the non-Sikh chiefs, mainly the Muslims and the Dogras to their side. Many Sikh *sardars* like Sandhanwalias also got into their bandwagon. Excepting a few Muslim chiefs and administrative personnel, majority of them had switched over their allegiance to the British when the second Anglo-Sikh War was fought.

– Dr. Joginder Singh

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3. Henry T. Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh power in the Punjab and political life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* (1970 Reprint), p. 88.
4. Ibid., pp. 102-03.
5. C. H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, "Appendix C": (1970 Reprint), pp. 234-35.
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8. H. R. Gupta, *op. cit.,* pp. 112-116.
9. Jasbir Singh (1993), pp. 22, 42.
10. Ibid.
11. H. R. Gupta *op. cit.,*, pp. 173-177.
12. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire* , 1967, pp. 18-19.

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13. B.R.Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*, 1969, pp. 427-28.
14. Encyclopaedia of Sikhism (1995), Vol. I, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 156.
15. Ibid., pp. 161-62.
16. Jagjiwan Mohan, *Walia Parties and Politics at the Sikh Court*, 1799-1849, 1982, pp. 301-03.
17. C. H. Pyne *op. cit.,* pp. 2, 34-35.
18. B. R. Chopra (1969), p. 282.
19. C. H. Pyne *op. cit.,*, p. 164 : Towards the beginning of the first Anglo-Sikh War Jawahar Singh too sought the British support.
20. B. R. Chopra, *Kingdom of the Punjab*, 1969, pp. 402-403.
21. Lepel Griffen, *op. cit.,* pp. 519-34.
22. Ibid., p. 532.
23. Ibid., pp. 549-50.
24. Ibid., pp. 536-37.
25. Ibid., pp. 539.
26. Gazetter of the Multan District (1883-84), p. 31.
27. *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. III.
28. Sita Ram Kohli, *op. cit.,* p. 124.
29. Lepel Griffin (1865), p. 488 : In lieu of loyal services rendered to the British, Sarfraz Khan was awarded Jagir of Rs. 1,100 in the village of Chamusa and a cash pension of Rs. 14,720 annually for the whole life.
30. Ibid., p. 493 : For this service, the shrines were Jagir of Rs. 700 and cash allowance of Rs. 1,300.
31. Sita Ram Kohli, *op. cit.,* p. 124.
32. *Ecyclopaedia of Sikhism,* 1965, Vol. I, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 107.
33. Ibid.
34. Lepel Griffin, *op. cit.,*, p. 506 : "His influence, which was great in the edistrict, was all used against the rebels, and his services were especially valuable at a time when it was inexpedient to detach a force against petty rebel leades. After annexation, Ismail Khan was made Risalder of the Jhang Mounted Police, but his services were, through inadvertence, overlooked and it was not till 1856 that he received a pension of Rs. 600 for life. Three wells were also released to him and his male heirs in perpetuity."
35. *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* , 1995, Vol. I, p. 107.
36. Indu Banga (1982), pp. 19-20; Prem Singh Hoti Mardan (1979), pp. 134-40; G.L. Chopra, *The Punjab as a Sovereign State,* 1975, pp. 111-12.
37. G. L. Chopra, *The Punjab as a Sovereign State,* 1975, p. 110.
38. Ibid., p. 111.
39. Lepel Griffen, *op. cit.,* p. 157.
40. Ibid., pp. 158-59.
41. Ibid., p. 162.
42. Ibid., p. 164.
43. Ibid.
44. Arbab Nawab Muhammad Khan Rais-i-Azam of Tahkal (Peshawar) laid down his life in the battle of Jamrud in 1837 while fighting against Afghans; Khan Muhammad Ismail Khan laid down his life in the battle field of Turlandi. He fought against his own tribe Yusufzai. Similarly, Mian Ilahi Bakhsh and Mian Ghausa Khan performed their duties faithfully. For detail, see, (Prem Singh Hoti Mardan), pp. 135-138; Imam Shah was another colonel of artillery. He served throughout the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors, and was killed at Sabroan in 1846; Lepel Griffen (1865), pp. 470-471.
45. Lepel Griffin, *op. cit.,* pp. 380-381.

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26

FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR – 1845-46

Misr Lal Singh Declared Prime Minister

On the death of Misr Basti Ram, his nephew Misr Beli Ram was appointed the Chief Manager and Controller of the Treasury of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Misr Jassa Mal, a poor Brahmin shopkeeper, hailing from village Singhuian in Jhelum district, was then petty Munshi under Misr Beli Ram, who was not on good terms with Dhian Singh Dogra, the Prime Minister, and the latter got him appointed the *Toshakhania.* Misr Jassa Mal, however, died in 1829, leaving his son, Misr Lal Singh, to the care of the Dogra brothers, who got him appointed to the post held by his father. His younger brother, Misr Bhagwan Singh also used to attend the *Toshakhana* to pick up the business of office, as the Prime Minister intended to replace Misr Beli Ram by this young boy, but Dhian Singh Dogra was assassinated in September 1843 by Sandhanwalia. When Hira Singh Dogra and Misr Jalla came to power, Misr Lal Singh, the crafty Brahmin, made representation against Misr Beli Ram and Bhai Gurmukh Singh, his patrons, inducing the Dogras to take their lives. In this manner, the cunning Misr became the Chief Treasurer to the Lahore Government, as the protege of the Dogras but, at the same time, actively engaging himself in the destruction of his benefactors.

A temporary disagreement between Hira Singh Dogra and his uncle, Gulab Singh Dogra, resulted in the confiscation of the lands and other property of Raja Fazaldad Khan of Rohtas and Domelia who actively supported Gulab Singh Dogra, and Hira Singh Dogra formally installed Misr Lal Singh, on November 25, 1843, as the Raja in his place, and himself made the *teeka* on his forehead, waving a *chourie* over his head. Favoured with the title of *Raja*, he intrigued with Rani Jindan to bring about the death of the Dogra Chief Minister, in order to fill his place, never allowing the Dogras to suspect him of his base treacherous conduct. Off the guard were thrown the Dogras. When at last the Dogras were being chased by Jawahar Singh Aulakh, Raja Lal Singh

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was personally paying his respects to Rani Jindan. Hearing the death of his benefactors, he was the first to inform joyfully, Rani Jindan, congratulating her on the annihilation of the Dogras.

Jawahar Singh Aulakh, the brother of the Rani, was then acknowledged as the head of the government and Raja Lal Singh, aspiring for this office, became his bitter, but secret, enemy. On the murder of Kanwar Pashaura Singh, the army was bent upon taking revenge from Raja Lal Singh but, he with Bakhshi Bhagat Ram and others distributed fifteen thousand rupees among the soldiery and paid twenty-five thousand rupees to *Mian* Pirthi Singh Dogra and his men to promote conspiracy to finish with Jawahar Singh, to secure his own person. The *Panches* assuming all power were mere peasants with little knowledge of administrative procedure. On September 22, 1845, a day after the murder of Jawahar Singh Aulakh, they decided to deal with policy matters themselves, leaving the details of the execution to Diwan Dina Nath, while Dalip Singh was to continue as the Maharaja with Rani Jindan as a Regent. Five days later, an oath of allegiance to them was taken by the troops at all regimental centres solemnly swearing to fight the enemy even across the Sutlej. Raja Lal Singh summoned a Council of the *sardars* at the Shalimar Garden at Lahore where Diwan Dina Nath surveyed the events of the past months and read out letters received from the *kardars* intimating the intentions of the British to seize cis-Sutlej possessions of the Lahore Darbar, reminding further that their monarch was still a child, with habits of playing and there was no recognised Head of the State to run the government efficiently. References made to Sri Anandpur Sahib, the place attached to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, had the desired effect and the *Panches*, declared Raja Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh as the Prime Minister and Commander-in-chief, respectively, the formal installation was to take place at the *samadh* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. On November 18, 1845, at the *samadh*, the assembly was held where passages from Guru Granth Sahib were recited and *karah parshad* was distributed and all the *sardars*, officers, and *panches*, laying their hands on Guru Granth Sahib and on the hem of the sacred canopy over the *samadh*, swore allegiance to Maharaja Dalip Singh and obedience to Raja Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh.

War and Counter War-Plans

During the whole time that tumult and confusion were reigning in the Punjab, the attitude assumed by the British Government was not pacific. That war was inevitable had been generally believed both by the British and the Sikhs. Lord Ellenborough[1], had fixed November 1845 as the month for the commencement of the war. For six years (1836-42) he had worked on the plan to annex the kingdom of the Punjab and left India in 1842 in expectation of his successor, Henry Hardinge

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(*Tunda Lat*)[2] implementing his well-designed aggressive policy maintaining regular correspondence with him. The British asserted that their actions were merely defensive measures to guard against the designs of the overbearing Sikh army. To make preparations was one thing but to be always making preparations was another. Cordons around the Sikh kingdom, built in the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, were placed by the British from the very olden days. In 1809, the late Maharaja was baulked of the project on incorporating the territory to the East of the Sutlej into his kingdom. In 1835 he had to keep his hands off from occupying Ferozepur[3], which later became a military cantonment for the British acting as a pistol on the temple of the Maharaja. Shikarpur, Little Tibet and other regions of strategic importance were also not allowed to be acquired by him. After the Maharaja's death, the British longed for the annexation of the Kingdom on some pretext, but the sober and intelligent among the British chose to play the nasty game of 'Divide and Rule'.

(A) Assemblage of Army on Border

Any doubt there may have been of their intentions was removed by their sinister activities on the border. Till the year 1838, the only British Military station on the Sikh frontier was Ludhiana with only 3,000 men and 12 guns. At the close of the year, a new cantonment at Ferozepur was established, maintaining a division of soldiers with 12 guns. Lord Ellenborough, a warmonger, desiring for territorial expansion, had written to the Field-Marshal, the Duke of Wellington, on October 15, 1841:

> "...I am most anxious to have your opinion as to the general principles upon which a campaign against that country (Punjab) should be conducted.'

Eleven days later, he again wrote:

> 'At present, about 12,000 men are collected near Ferozepur to watch the Sikhs and act if necessary.'

The Governor General founded a military cantonment at Ambala in the year 1842, with smaller ones at Kasauli[4], Simla and Sabathu, in the Simla Hills. The strength of the British garrison on the Punjab frontier alone was 17,612 men and 66 guns. From Camp Fatehpur, Lord Ellenborough had written to Duke of Wellington, on February 11, 1844:

> 'If we are obliged to meet the Sikhs at any time, we shall have a very powerful artillery to encounter, and it is very necessary that every possible measure should be previously taken to make an artillery most efficient.'

He then wrote from Allahabad, on February 15, 1844:

> 'I am quietly doing what I can to strengthen and equip it (army). I am fully aware of the great magnitude of the operation in which we should embark, if we ever should cross the Sutlej....'

Ellenborough, therefore, made planned preparations for occupation of the Punjab

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and when he was succeeded by his close friend and kinsman by marriage, Henry Hardinge, the latter considerably added to the strength of the army assembled on the Punjab border, and the British force near about Ambala was augmented from 13,600 men and 48 guns in January 1844 to 40,523 men and 94 guns, besides large reserve posted at Meerut and Delhi and assemblage of 1,100 picked horses and mules at Mathura[5] and 500 elephants, 700 camels and large number of bullocks between Sutlej and Kanpur. In September 1845, sixty large boats, each fitted with a gun and two grappling irons with strong chains and having a capacity of carrying 100 men were delivered at Ferozepur to serve as a bridge. The Southern frontier was held by Charles Napier, who was only waiting for an order to cross over to the Punjab. This assemblage of the British army on and so near the Punjab border was the first indication of the hostile intentions and designs of the British Government and the Sikh Government was genuinely provoked to make counter-preparations to meet the challenge from the 'ally.'

(B) Supply Depot near the Border

Military stores and provision depots were set up at different places, including at Bassian[6], so near the Sutlej, giving unmistakable sign of British readiness to undertake the operations against the Sikhs at short notice. Food and ammunition, and carriage and hospital stores, as were necessary for a campaign, soon poured in from Delhi and Agra to give a finale to the preparation. On October 23, 1845, Henry Hardinge wrote to Ellenborough:

> "The Punjab must however be Sikh or British.... The delay is merely a postponement of the settlement of the question, at the same time we must bear in mind that as yet no cause of war has been given."

(C) Collection of Pontoons

Under instructions from the Duke of Wellington, Ellenborough had ordered for the collection of pontoons near Ferozepur for transporting troops and military supplies and also for the formation of the Bridge-of-Boats over the Sutlej for the British troops to march into the land of their 'ally'. And the Governor-General wrote back from Calcutta on May 9, 1844:

> "I expect that by the end of December, there will be on the Sutlej seventy boats of about thirty-five tons each, all exactly similar and each containing every thing necessary for its equipment as a pontoon.... Besides these, fifty six pontoons will be ready for use in Scinde. All these are in hand at Bombay. We shall besides have, by the end of this year, I hope, two steamers drawing very little water on the Sutlej."

In a confidential letter to Major George Broadfoot[7], the Private Secretary to the Governor-General stated on February 20, 1845:

> "It is not desirable that the purpose to which these boats can be applied should unnecessarily transpire... But if any inquiry should be made hereafter, your answer will be that this

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flotilla of boats is not at present required on the lower Indus, that our commissariat arrangements do require the employment of boats between Ferozepur and Sukkur for the supply of the latter place with grain....'[8]

Thus boats for bridges, and regiments and guns – the provocative to a war – were sufficiently numerous[9]. Unprovoked attack of Afghanistan, unjust occupation of Sind from the Amirs, and Kaithal from the Sikhs, and the like, were sufficient provocative to the Sikhs. Still they maintaining a complete restraint and order at Lahore, continued to behave like friends upto the last. Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington on September 20, 1843. "There does not seem to be any feeling against us. They are only quarrelling amongst themselves apparently; nor do I see the least show of hostility to us anywhere."

Two months later, on November 20, he addressed to Queen Victoria: "The Sikh army, intent only on obtaining more pay, has remained tranquil, and no indication has been given of the least desire to provoke the resentment of the British Government."

(D) Appointment of Major Broadfoot

Henry Hardinge had specifically brought Major Broadfoot as Political Agent on the Punjab Frontier to speed up the military operation on the Sutlej, as the war with the Sikhs was to come soon after November 1845, the date already fixed by the former Governor-General, Ellenborough. Broadfoot, personally hostile to the Sikhs[10], had adopted an arrogant and overbearing attitude towards the officials of the Sikh Government who came for the internal administration of their cis-Sutlej possessions as a matter of right. He 'interfered more than we ever did in a protected State. He avowed that he had arranged to occupy the Lahore territory, cis-Sutlej; in case anything should happen to Duleep Singh who was then ill. And he forbade the Darbar to send any troops over for any purpose whatever.'[11] J.D. Cunningham confirmed this attitude of the ambitious Political Agent thus:

> One of Major Broadfoot's first acts was to declare the Cis-Sutlej possessions of Lahore to be under British protection equally with Putteeala and other chiefs and also to be liable to escheat on the death or deposition of Maharaja Dalip Singh. This view was not formally announced to the Sikh Government...[12]

Sardar Lal Singh Adalti, a Judge in Lahore service, crossed the Sutlej, at Talwandi in the Lahore territory for official duty. Major Broadfoot deliberately flouting the canons of justice captured and humiliated the Sikh party. Robert N Cust[13] narrated the event as under:

> "Good Friday fell on March 21 (1845), and on the day following, the news reached us at Zirah on the high road between Ferozepur and Ludhiana, that a party of Sikhs had crossed the Sutlej at Talwandi, not far from us. We sent word to them to go quickly back; in the meantime we collected our forces; H.M. 62nd were encamped close to us, and on Easter-day 1845, as the Sikhs, had not crossed back, we started at daylight with 60

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infantry and 300 sabres. The sight was pretty one (I copy from my journal) : 'Broadfoot and I rode in advance; on arriving at Talwandi we found that the party had retreated, but had refused to pay for the damage, which they had done; on this Broadfoot and I dashed on with the cavalry. Arriving at the bank of the Sutlej, we espied the party at some little distance attempting to cross the deep stream in boats; on we went and caught the last boatful which we knew by the standards to contain the Chief of the party, Bhai Bishan Singh; these we seized with their horses and camels; one man was shot in confusion. The scene was very pretty, just the junction of Beas and Sutlej."

The affairs gave rise to great irritation. George Campbell records:

"Broadfoot seems to have felt that he could hardly justify the making prisoner of a Lahore Judge on Lahore soil; he put it on the ground that in decamping they had not paid the villagers for the supplies they had and the damage they had done. He made them pay for that, and finally let them go. Even from his own point of view, viz, regarding the Lahore territory south of the river as a protected State,*such a proceeding was wholly unjustifiable.* In a petty matter of supplies, we never should have dreamed of interfering between a protected Chief and his subjects.[14] This was, in reality, considered to be the first shot of the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1845-46."

(E) Occupation of the Sikh Island

A year before the breakout of the First Anglo-Sikh war, an island between Ferozepur and the Punjab, belonging to the Sikhs, was unjustifiably occupied by the British and this was a clear instance of a breach of the rules of friendship.[15]

(F) Undemarcated boundaries on Sind Border

In the summer of the year 1845, some horsemen from Multan crossed a few miles into the Sind territory in pursuit of certain marauders. The boundary between the two provinces between the Indus and the Hills nowhere defined, and the object of the pursuers was quite evident but the Governor, Charles Napier, ordered for the preservation of the integrity of the frontier from violation. "The Lahore authorities were indeed put upon their guard, but they did not admit the sufficiency of the reasons given, and they looked upon the prompt measure of the Conqueror of Sindh as *one more proof of the desire io bring*about a war with the Punjab".[16] Added to this, Charles Napier made a speech that was published in the *Delhi Gazette,* stating that the British were going to war with the Sikhs and the Sikhs had obtained translated versions of that speech.[17] This was enough to provoke the peaceful Sikhs to warlike preparations. According to Fateh Singh Mann, a Sardar of the Lahore Darbar, 'it behoves every wise Raj to avoid being taken unawares.'

(G) Case of Mauran Village

Hira Singh Dogra was crowned with success in the administration of the internal affairs, but he could make little headway against the unjust proceedings of the British authorities, across the Sutlej, in regard to two matters, resulting in causing serious

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dissatisfaction to the Lahore Court. Those were, firstly, the Mauran estate resumed by the Raja of Nabha and, secondly, the treasure left by Suchet Singh Dogra at Ferozepur.

The native village of Dhanna Singh Malwai, a distinguished officer of the Khalsa army under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was Mauran in the Nabha territory, originally belonging to the rulers of Nabha and Patiala in equal shares. After the Multan campaign, in 1818, the Sardar begged the Maharaja to obtain that village, for him by way of *Jagir*. The Maharaja, accordingly, applied to Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha who, agreeing to the proposal, in May 1819, made him a grant of the village in exchange for certain villages which the Maharaja gave to the sister of the Nabha Chief, for her life. The Maharaja, on obtaining the village, gave it to the *sardar*, who enjoyed undisputed possession thereof, until his death in May 1845. Raja Davinder Singh, who succeeded Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha in 1840, not being agreeable to the arrangement, was eager to recover this village from Hukam Singh Malwai, the *sardar*'s son; for the *sardar* neither obeyed his orders nor tendered him any allegiance, but the British authorities, having regard for the fine old chief, interposed in his behalf. The Raja of Nabha represented to the Agent of the British Governor General that he had obtained the consent of Maharaja Kharak Singh (which was later proved to be false) to resume this village, and George Clerk, without questioning the authenticity of the document, supported the resumption of the village by him. To satisfy his ego, and with the sanction of the British government, Raja Devinder Singh marched his troops against it, in August 1845, and took possession by force, killing and wounding some of the Malwai retainers and seizing the property of Hukam Singh Malwai.

The Lahore Government made a demand for the restoration of this village, an estate given by Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha to Maharaja Ranjit Singh as back as in 1819 for full and good consideration but the British now produced a new argument in the matter. General Octerlony, George Clerk and Colonel Richmond had never known that the village had been given to the Maharaja, but imagined that it had been a *Jagir* grant direct from Nabha to Dhanna Singh Malwai. According to them, the grant to Lahore was in itself invalid, for a dependent state had no power to transfer a village to an independent one without the consent of the paramount (British) Power, with the result that the village was restored neither to the Lahore State nor to Hukam Singh Malwai, the successor-in-interest of the original donee. The British Government was wholly unjustified in this respect, as the Raja of Nabha had given away permanently all his rights, title and interests in this village, as back as in 1819, to the Maharaja who had further bestowed it on, or confirmed it to his dependent. Moreover, in March 1836, when a detachment of British troops went from Ludhiana to put down the insurrection in Ballanwali, near Bathinda, under Gulab Singh Gill, Village Mowran held by Dhanna Singh Malwai was acknowledged to belong to Lahore, in a

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letter written at the time, about supplies for the troops. The Darbar justly considered that the Nabha Raja had taken undue advantage of British protection to throw uncalled for contempt on the Punjab Government, and this resulted in causing rooted feeling of suspicion in the minds of all about the Court.

The British, early in October 1844, decided the case in favour of Raja of Nabha, on the ground that the transfer, if made to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the late Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha 24 years ago, was so made without the sanction or cognizance of the British Government and, in the words of the Governor General of India, "We will not suffer chiefs within our Frontier, and enjoying our protection to transfer their property, thus situated, to Foreign Princes without our knowledge and consent." The Sikhs were not satisfied with this line of thinking and even a direction to the Raja of Nabha to compensate fully the parties who were injured and endamaged by his violent proceedings did not soften them. They intimated Major C.S. Broadfoot, the new British Political Agent at Ludhiana, that "the Ferozepur treasure is a trifle, but Mowran a serious affair."

(H) Treasure left by Suchet Singh Dogra

The Dogra Rajas of Jammu had always sought to acquire wealth by trade as well as by war and policy, and they had a house in Ferozepur for some years past, for the transaction of their business in salt chiefly of several mines concerning which Gulab Singh Dogra held the contract from the Lahore Government. Even after the death of Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh, Suchet Singh Dogra had designed to leave the Punjab with all his wealth, estimated at two *crores* of *rupees* and to pass his life in performing pilgrimages and in building temples and charitable buildings. Like Ghanhiya Lal in *Tarikh-i-Panjab*, many asserted that, at the time of the First Afghan War, the British Government had floated a loan. Greatly anxious to win over the English and also to secure his wealth outside the Sikh Kingdom, the Dogra Raja sent cash and gold worth Rs 15 *lakh* to Ferozepur, with a design to advance it to the British. The money, however, having reached there late, was not needed by the British, so it was safely buried in their house at Ferozepur under the custody of a trusted and confidential servant, Nihal Singh. This treasure was stored in three big copper vessels, each closed with lead on which the Raja's seal was affixed, and buried in a house owned by the Dogra Brothers. When the news of the death of Suchet Singh Dogra reached Ferozepur, Nihal Singh was discovered trying to remove the same. Captain Saunders Abbot, the Assistant Resident, took with him Lala Ram Dayal, the Lahore *Vakil*, had the treasure dug up and removed to the British treasury for safe custody. Hira Singh Dogra, the Prime Minister, being convinced that legally the wealth stored at Ferozepur belonged to the Lahore Darbar as Suchet Singh Dogra was one of its subjects and died childless and also that he was a rebel and, as such, it should go to the Sikh Government,

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claimed the money for the Lahore Darbar. Richmond assured the Lahore *Vakil* that the British Government had no claim to the property that it would at once be given up when demanded by parties who could scarcely be regarded as the natural heirs of Suchet Singh Dogra. The Governor General, Lord Ellenborough regretted that Richmond should have held out hopes that the treasure would be made over to the Lahore Darbar. The Governor-General considered the treasure to belong to the heirs of Suchet Singh Dogra. The Lahore authorities had advanced the following very sound and convincing arguments, in support of their claim to the treasure:

1st, that the Government of the Punjab was *de-facto* Government ruling over a numerous people judging between man and man;

2nd, that it was the only true interpreter of its own laws, and that it could best decide to whom the treasure deposited by its subject in Ferozepur belonged;

3rd, that the treasure in question was not claimed by any subject or dependent of the British Government and that, consequently, it must belong wholly to subjects or dependents of the Lahore Government, which could best determine the rights of the claimants; and

4th, that the subjects of Lahore could only communicate, as such, with British Government through their own Government, that is, in short, that the two Governments had no concern whatever with the subjects of one another and that the rights of the subjects of each were to be obtained only through the respective Governments.

Richmond addressed letters separately to Gulab Singh Dogra, his nephew Hira Singh Dogra and to the deceased's widow, informing them that the treasure would be held in deposit with the British, as trust, until the Governor-General was satisfied about its rightful owner. Maharaja Dalip Singh wrote a personal letter to Lord Hardinge requesting that the property be transferred to the former, to be made over to those whose right it was. Suchet Singh Dogra's widow, a cousin of Raja Jagat Chand of Bilaspur State, who had adopted as her son Gulab Singh Dogra's younger son, Ranbir Singh alias Mian Pheena, wrote that the treasure so left by her late husband should not be given up without her consent or of her son on which Richmond wrote to the Maharaja that the widow of the deceased Raja had forbidden the treasure to be given explaining "the legal obligation by which the British Government is bound only to transfer the property with the consent of the parties to whom it belongs". This coldness, undue delay and apathy naturally excited the suspicion of the Lahore Darbar towards the British Government. In October 1844, shortly after receiving the communication from the British authorities, the Maharaja wrote back that the treasure be transferred to the Lahore Government for distribution among the heirs of the deceased Raja, but they were interested in placing that wealth at the disposal of Hira Singh Dogra alone.

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The British Government seemed to be aware of the fluid internal affairs of the Lahore Government that the end of the Dogra Prime Minister was fast approaching. Soon the revolution of December 21, 1844, carried away the existing ruling party at Lahore. Eventually this money was counted as having been paid by Gulab Singh Dogra to the British Government, as part payment for Kashmir sold to him at the close of the first Anglo-Sikh War in 1846.

(I) British Agents and Spies

Broadfoot was bent upon winning over the high-ups and chiefs of the Lahore Darbar, and Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Tej Singh and Misr Lal Singh had agreed to act as the agents and spies of the British Government. Not content with the services of these important chiefs, he sent for Genda Singh, a confidant of Raja Devinder Singh of Nabha and directed him to go and stay at Lahore, spread hatred and discord in that State in every way, suggest the entry of the British in that country, furnish the details of the state of affairs there, besides sending him a genealogical table of the*Sarkar* of Lahore, in consideration of favours to be bestowed on him. Genda Singh wrote out the genealogical table but refused to go to, and stay at Lahore. Greatly annoyed and displeased, Broadfoot complained against him to the Raja for disobedience, desiring him to be punished, with a further direction to send Genda Singh's son, a shrewd person, for the purpose.[18] This information was passed on to the Lahore Government by their *Vakil* at Ludhiana and a wave of resentment on the secret activities of their British 'Friend' for the subversion of their kingdom gripped the Sikhs. The Raja of Nabha was heavily fined, deposed and exiled by the British Government after the conclusion of the First Anglo Sikh War. Broadfoot also made a successful attempt to tamper with the loyality of Diwan Mulraj, the Governor of Multan.[19]

(J) The Traitors At Work

After the assassination of Jawahar Singh Aulakh, Raja (Misr) Lal Singh and Misr Teja Singh urged the Sikhs on to war with the British at the bidding of Major Broadfoot and his Assistant, Captain Peter Nicholson. Gulab Singh Dogra had already succumbed to the promises of Hill territory made by the Britisl[20]. They all were in constant and secret correspondence with the British keeping them fully informed of the movements at Lahore and later in the battlefields.

All these activities were severe challenge to the Sikhs' forbearance and national pride. How could they show a spirit of restraint and self control in the face of grave and provocative situation? The *Panches* held a stormy meeting, lasting some four hours, on November 17, at the Royal palace, in the presence of Rani Jindan. Faqir Aziz-ud-din and Bhai Ram Singh still opined that British were honest and could not dishonour the treaty and cross the Sutlej, the national boundary, feeling that their preparations were as defensive as those of the Punjabis, but the consensus of the meeting was that

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the British were, for all practical purposes, on warpath and that their aggression must be resisted at all cost and with all the might. Raja Lal Singh was directed to command the *Ghorchara* Cavalry numbering some 22,000 with a few camps of artillery. The remaining army, some 42,000 infantry with about ten regiments of regular cavalry and great part of the artillery was to march in divisions towards Ferozepur. Raja Lal Singh was to follow them in a few days and General Tej Singh[21] was to supervise the preparations. On November 23, Raja Lal Singh, with the force at his command, encamped a little beyond the Shalimar Gardens and then moved to a distance of some ten *kos* and halted for five or six days. Infantry also moved under orders of General Tej Singh but himself staying behind at Lahore. The entire army, having arrived on the right bank of the Sutlej, sent message to the General to reach and head the troops in person which he chose to do after December 16, 1845,[22] long after the Proclamation of war issued by the Governor General. In the meantime, the British Agent cleverly sought an explanation of the military preparations and the Darbar replied that they were a counter measure to their own preparations. The Darbar then put forward their claim, to the treasure of Raja Suchet Singh Dogra, held by the British and also for the restoration of the village of Mauran, in the Nabha territory, to the Sikh Chief, Hukam Singh Malwai.[23] Then, there was the question of a free passage to the Punjab Police Constabulary to the Darbar possessions across the Sutlej, a right that had been recognised and acknowledged by the British on paper but denied in practice. The British Agent, feeling dissatisfied with the replies, handed over his passport on December 3, 1845, severing unilaterally, diplomatic relations with the Lahore Darbar and, five days later, British units from Ambala and Meerut, under the command of Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief, moved to join the British army at Ferozepur. The Punjabi Generals genuinely apprehended that if the two enemy armies were allowed to pool their forces, they would certainly cross the river over the pontoon bridge and quietly march towards Lahore. The Darbar army was also given marching orders to keep the Ferozepur army where he was and to intercept the column advancing under Hugh Gough and Henry Hardinge. The Lahore force crossed the Sutlej on December 12, 1845, when the Governor General was still far away from the border.

Proclamation of War December 13, 1845

Soon after the Sikhs had crossed the Sutlej and encamped in their own territory, without committing any act of aggression, Henry Hardinge, while camping at Sarai Lashkari Khan,[24] issued the Proclamation of war, declaring war on the Sikhs, and simultaneously confiscating and annexing to the British territories, the possessions of Maharaja Dalip Singh on the left bank of the Sutlej, and calling upon the Sardars and the Chiefs of the Cis-Sutlej region to cooperate with the British in punishing the

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common enemy. The text of the Proclamation was full of false allegations and contradictory statements wholesomely belied by facts.[25] It was absurd to maintain that the measures adopted by the British were only to counter-act the designs of the uncontrolled Khalsa. The truth was expressed by Major G. Carmychaial Smyth of the Third Bengal Light Cavalry, when he wrote:

> "With the Seik for several years past, in fact ever since the death of Runjeet Sing, we have been playing the fable of the 'Shepherd Boy and the Wolf.' The papers and the politicals had constantly been crying out: 'The Sheikhs are coming'....[26]

And so, the follies and excesses of the Sikhs served as a cover for very purposeful military preparations uncomfortably close to their borders. Despite the forthright language of the Proclamation of War, Henry Hardinge was full of doubts. Robert N Cust[27] wrote in his Journal:

> "December 18th... I rode behind the Governor-General and we sat under a tree to await the infantry. The Governor-General remarked: "Will the people of England consider this an actual invasion of our frontier and a justification of war?"

It is not surprising that Robert N. Cust referred to the advances of their forces towards the Sikh kingdom as 'the first British invasion of the independent kingdom of the Punjab.' Leaving aside the contemporary Punjabi historians, the opinions of two other British officers, closely connected with the Anglo-Punjab politics are worth noting. Major G.C. Smyth wrote:

> "Regarding the Punjaub war; I am neither of opinion that the Sikh made an *unprovoked attack*, nor that we have acted towards them with *great forbearance*. If the Seiks were to be considered entirely an independent State, in no way answerable to us, we should not have provoked them – for to assert that the bridge of boats brought from Bombay, was not a *cause belli* but merely a defensive measure is absurd; besides, the Seiks had translations of Sir Charles Napier's speech, (as it appeared in the *Delhi Gazette*) stating that we were going to war with them; and, as all European powers would have done under such circumstances, the Seiks thought it as well to be first in the field. Moreover they were not encamped in our territory, but their own;.... and I only ask, had we not departed *from the rules of friendship first?* The year before the war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozepur and the Punjaub, though it belonged to the Seiks, owing to the deep water being between us and the island.... But if on the other hand the treaty of 1809 is said to have been binding between the two Governments, then the simple question is, who first departed from the 'rules of friendship'? I am decidedly of opinion that we did."[28]

George Campbell, then posted at Kaithal[29] wrote in the Memoirs:

> "The immediate collision was, however, I think hastened by imprudence on the part of the British Frontier Agent, Major Broadfoot. I know of some things done by him which it would be difficult to defend."[30]

At another place, he stated:

> "It is recorded in the annals of history, or what is called history, which will go down to

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posterity, that the Sikh army invaded British territory in pursuance of a determination to attack us. And most people will be very much surprised to hear that they did nothing of the kind. They made no attack on our outlying cantonments, nor set foot in our territory. What they did do was to cross the river, and to entrench themselves in their own territory."[31]

The dishonesty by which lie upon lie was palmed upon the world had not one redeeming feature. If public men were, without reprehension, to be permitted to lie in the face of nations wilfully, elaborately and maliciously to bear false witness against their neighbours, what hope was there for private veracity? Lt. William Hodson wrote a private letter on March 30, 1846 to his friend, F.A. Foster:

"England, I see, is ringing with the deeds of the 'army of the Satlaj'... The dispatches are most disgraceful. The most unblushing falsehoods are put forth, both as to facts, figures, and individuals with coolness worthy of Napoleon. I have little hopes, however of any improvement Success – ultimate success – throws its cloak of charity over unnumbered errors..."[32]

Even according to Henry Hardinge, right upto December 12, 1845, 'no Sikh aggression had been committed, and no artillery had moved down to the river.'[33] When the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej, they remained in their own territory and not crossed into the British. They, therefore, did not violate the British Frontier or invade the British territory, nor did they break any treaty or rules of friendship. Here let us compare the patience and forbearance of the Sikh and British Governments, governed by Treaties of friendship. Lord Ellenborough had been assembling a force on the Punjab frontier and collecting guns and other munitions of war at Ferozepur (within five miles of the Sikh territory) and other places for over two years, while plans for military invasion and occupation of the Punjab had been prepared in 1841 and were being discussed since his arrival in India. His successor, Henry Hardinge had gradually, during the past sixteen months, increased the military strength with considerable additions to some of the war stations.

The Sikhs patiently saw and bore all this, and made no active preparations or movements against the British beyond diplomatic protests. The British, on the contrary, could not tolerate even a fortnight of half-hearted preparations at Lahore, with *their own men* at the helm of affairs there. Not a single soldier had crossed the Sutlej up to December 11, 1845,[34] yet the Governor-General, on the advice of his too-prone-to-war Political Agent Major Broadfoot, who was eager to give the final provocation in response to the Sikh declaration, directed the Commander-in-chief on the 6th to move up the force from Ambala, Meerut, etc., towards Ludhiana and Ferozepur. The Sikhs had declared that 'they desired peace but if troops marched from our (British) stations to Ludhiana and Ferozepur, they would march too.'[35] Broadfoot would not lose any opportunity to bring things to a head. And Sir Henry Hardinge implicitly accepted the advice of his Political Agent and advisor in ordering the movement of British troops.[36]

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Yet, the Sikhs kept calm and displayed a wonderful spirit of self control in face of grave provocation. They came, they crossed the river but they stayed in their own territory[37] without indulging in any aggressive or warlike activity.[38]

Treason of Misr Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh

It was an irony of fate that the Punjabis started with the basic handicap of being led by arch traitors. There is enough evidence to establish that, at different times, both the Prime Minister, Raja Lal Singh, and the Commander-in-Chief, Tej Singh, and at a later stage, Raja Gulab Singh Dogra, the surviving Dogra chief, were in constant communication with the British. There was nothing concrete to implicate Rani Jindan, apart from her supposed intimacy with Raja Lal Singh and his lone letter to British 'to consider him and the Bibi Sahib as their friends.' Still, the enemies of the Rani falsely gave out that she was an accessory to the plan to destroy the Khalsa, who had executed her brother, Jawahar Singh Aulakh. The bard, Shah Mohammad under the influence of such feelings, went to the extent of stating that the Rani 'tore up the State from the floor'. Thus, Raja Lal Singh encamped at some dozen points between Lahore, Padhana[39] and Sursinghwala[40], etc., not to gain a victory over the British, but to win their goodwill and continue as Minister in a dependent state. The first thing Raja Lal Singh did, on crossing the Sutlej, was to write to Captain Peter Nicholson[41] at Ferozepur: 'I have crossed with the Sikh army. You know my friendship to the British. Tell me what to do.' He replied: 'Do not attack Ferozepur. Halt as many days as you can, and then march towards the Governor-General.' Raja Lal Singh cunningly persuaded the army to encounter the main body of the enemy forces, which were yet on way from India, instead of crushing the isolated garrison of 8,000 men at Ferozepur. What a military tactic to win the field!

The treacherous Raja did not take due and timely advantages of the large number of 80,000 fighting men at this command, with an additional strength of some 1,20,000 followers and hangers on who had gathered to cause substantial damage in the enemy country. 'Had the Sikhs pushed forward at once after crossing Bassian with its great stores of provision must have fallen into their hands and a week or ten days must have elapsed before arrangement for provisioning the Umbala force could have been made. In that case, the whole Sikh army would have been able to concentrate its efforts upon the capture of Ferozepur which, in the absence of any fortifications capable of withstanding powerful artillery, could scarcely have been defended successfully.'[42] He, however, chose to obey the secret command of the British Officer and detached Tej Singh with a force to march towards Ferozepur and, taking the rest of the army with him a few miles upstream, entrenched himself in horse-shoe formation near the village of Ferozeshah,[43] with Sutlej flowing behind him and seven

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wells with good drinking water in their midst. He detached another force and marched it off to meet the main British army advancing under Lord Gough and the Governor General. Clearly, his sinister plan was to get the Sikh army defeated in detail and earn the gratitude of the British.

(A) MIDNIGHT MUDKI – DECEMBER 18, 1845

Raja Lal Singh left Ferozeshah with only half the force on the false plea that Tej Singh might require the remaining at Ludhiana and arrived at Mudki[44] at about noon and, an hour or two later, was faced by Hugh Gough's force of some thousand men of all arms with forty guns. In between the two armies was the level plain offering no serious impediment. Instead of retreating to more suitable defence, the Raja ordered for battle formation on an entirely flat ground with little cover for his guns, except some sandy dunes and stray bushes. Punjabi snipers took their positions on branches of some tamarisk trees growing nearby and, before the enemies were within range, he ordered to open fire, wasting large valuable ammunition. Hugh Gough waited quietly till the Sikh fire abated and then he got his guns in position with the front sight drawn on the spots already made known by flashes from the Sikh guns and, in a short time, concentrated cannonade silenced them. Just before sunset, the British cavalry charged the Sikh flanks. At that moment Raja Lal Singh betrayed the Khalsa, deserted his men amidst the battlefield and unceremoniously fled to the camp at Ferozeshah, hid himself in a haystack and skulked off from the army. Gardner also lamented that 'Lal Singh ran away at Mudki; he preferred the embraces of Venus at Lahore to the triumphs of Mars and was, as all Brahmans are, held in the highest contempt by the Sikhs.' Anyhow, the brave Khalsa fought a grim hand-to-hand battle against the enemy forces led by the most experienced commanders of Europe. The battle continued with unabated fury till midnight and, ultimately, the leaderless Khalsa, suffering a loss of over half of their comrades and 15 guns, retired from the field. "The treason saved the English," wrote Malleson, "from a sure defeat." In the words of the British Commander-in-Chief, who was present at the scene for the entire hundred minutes, "The Sikhs fought as if they had everything at stake." British losses, considering the brevity of the action, were heavy. 215 killed, including Sir Robert Sale,[45] the hero of Jallalabad, Sir Joseph Mc Gaskill[46] and two aides of the Governor-General and 657 wounded. Regarding the Khalsa, the record of their dead and wounded is silent. The march of the Sikhs towards Mudki was most haphazard, unplanned, disorderly and bound to end in disorder.[47] Still this battle fought by the Khalsa, leaderless as they were, served to dispel a notion that had gained credence with the British that the Sikhs were no great force to be reckoned with and that they were 'mere rabble.' Henry Hardinge had seen the valiant Sikhs in action 'and had wondered at their discipline and courage, their morale, equalled only in the finest British regiments.'[48] They, now fully, realized

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that they could not crush them without re-inforcement. It was due to this realization that the Khalsa were able to retire without further interference, but having tasted the Sikh steel once, the enemy felt it imperative to effect a junction with the division of John Littler at Ferozepur before engaging with the Sikhs at Ferozeshah.

(B) Night of Terror at Ferozeshah – Dec 21, 1845

Major General John Littler left Ferozepur on December 21 with 5,000 infantry, 2 regiments of cavalry and 21 guns, and relying on Raja Lal Singh's and Tej Singh's assurances, he left the post unmindful of 20,000 trained Sikhs hovering only six miles from Ferozepur. In the noon at 1-30 P.M., he joined the main British Force, raising the strength to 17,000 men and 69 guns as against the Sikh army, consisting of 12 battalions of infantry, 4 regiments of cavalry, 50 guns, and about 15,000 irregular horses. The Khalsa entrenched themselves in a formation about a mile long and half a mile deep, throwing up earthworks and simultaneously this information was secretly passed on to the British by Raja Lal Singh's emissary, Shams-ud-din Khan, on December 18 and 21, 1845 for which he was suitably rewarded with Rs. 5,000/- and an annual pension of Rs. 2,500/- after the conclusion of war.

Evidently under the impression that with their *own men* on the other side, the British army would have an easy walk over, the British forces, under Hugh Gough, stormed the Sikh entrenchments at 5-30 P.M. The Sikh gunners opened fire from the guns with greater rapidity than the British. Hand to hand combat also took place, when some foot soldiers, leaping over the mud entrenchments, grappled with the Sikh gunners. The Sikhs manfully stood to their guns and, within ten minutes, two hundred English soldiers were either killed or crippled. The battle had raged with extreme intensity through the dust and gloom of twilight. Unfortunately, a shell hit the Sikh powder magazine resulting in a tremendous explosion, causing fire to the nearby tents. But there was no fight left in the British; their men were parched with thirst, for all the wells were in the Sikh camps. By 3.00 A.M., on December 22, 1845, the last of the enemy advance units of Henry Smith's Brigade were repulsed and every inch of the ground that had been lost was recovered. On that bitterly cold frosty night, the fortunes of battle were on the side of the Sikhs. The British suffered terrible causalities – every single member of the Governor-General's staff had been either killed or wounded: among the dead were the notorious Major George Broadfoot[49] and his Assistant, Captain Nicholson, and indeed all the political Agents except one. Hugh Gough had his horse shot under him. Despair hung over the British camp and they spent a very anxious night on the battlefield. At one stage, some of the British officers had to plead retreat to Ferozepur but this timid counsel was spurned by both the war veterans in command. It was evident from the letters of Henry Hardinge that he was actually aware of the delicacy of his position. He had no reserve of troops,

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while the Sikhs had strong force at hand. So he visited one regiment after another of the tired soldiers, using the formulae: 'We must fight it out, boys. Attack vigorously in the morning, beat the enemy or die honourably in the field.' He then handed over to his civilian son, Charles, his Private Secretary, a few precious objects, a watch and a sword,[50] he had been given for his services in the Napoleonic campaigns, and some medals and decorations with a message to Frederick Currie[51] to destroy all his secret papers in case of defeat that was staring at them:

> 'In case of disaster, which was far from impossible, the Governor-General sent orders to Mudki, where Mr. Currie was in charge of official papers of the Government of India, and Mr. Cust of the records of the Agency, for the destruction of all State papers. Sir Henry's son, Charles, who was his Private Secretary, being a civilian, was ordered off the field.'[52]

At that point, indeed, the Sikhs might have secured the victory, had they been possessed of a worthy leader, burning with national zeal. Instead of going to the Front, Raja Lal Singh pretended to bring up the reserve force. Bartering his handsome horse for a *tattoo*[53], and smearing over his face with ashes, like a poor *fakir*, he quitted the field and hid himself for 20 days in an oven belonging to an old bakeress at Ludhiana, in which the Sikhs would have surely baked him, if they had found him. From there, he moved to Amritsar via Phillaur.

That frosty night, the fate of India actually trembled in the balance. British General, Sir Hope Grant, who himself fought the historical Anglo-Sikh Wars, wrote:

> "Truly that night was one of gloom and never perhaps in our annals of Indian warfare, has a British army on so large a scale been nearer to defeat which could have involved annihilation. The Sikhs had practically recovered the whole of their entrenched camp: our exhausted and decimated divisions bivouacked without mutual cohesion over a wide area...."

An entry in the diary of Robert Cust,[54] showed that the British Generals had practically decided to lay down their arms:

> "December 22nd. News came from the Governor-General that our attack of yesterday had failed, that affairs were desperate, that all state papers were to be destroyed and that if the morning attack failed, all would be over: this was kept secret by Mr. Currie and we were concerting measures to make an unconditional surrender to save the wounded, the part of the news that grieved me the most.'[55]

The British Commander-in-Chief admitted that some brave men lost nerve and urged retreat upon Ferozepur but he had resolved 'rather to have his bones to bleach honourably at Ferozeshah[56] than that they should rot dishonourably at Ferozepur.'

Early in the next morning, undaunted by heavy artillery, the British Infantry stormed the Punjabi position. Throughout the night, Misr Tej Singh, holding the envious rank and position of Commander-in-chief of the Sikhs, pretended to guard

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Ferozepur but, under strong pressure from the 30,000 strong and determined Khalsa, had to make a move for the battlefield, where he reached not earlier than 9 or 10 in the morning, when the army shamelessly abandoned by Raja Lal Singh, was still giving a tough fight to the enemy. The British guns had little ammunition left to fire and their men were too exhausted to fight. General Hugh Gough admitted: 'We had not a shot with our guns, and our cavalry horses were thoroughly done up.' The British claiming to be the top-class fighting force of the world resigned themselves to their fate and expected the Khalsa to give them *coup de grace*. Sir Harry Smith, who was in the battlefield, recorded in his Autobiography: "The ammunition of our guns was fully expended and our troops were literally exhausted, and we could not attack what would have been an easy prey under other circumstances." Misr Tej Singh opened the attack. He actually built a bomb-proof mud hut, like a small tent, for himself, inside which he sat doing *Puja*[57], his Brahmin astrologers being instructed to give out that everything depended on the safety of the holy man. The British artillery, for want of adequate ammunition, did not answer to the fire opened by the Misr and without any pregnant reason, the Khalsa guns also became silent and, a couple of minutes later, Misr Tej Singh ordered the Khalsa to stage a retreat, and instead to meet the enemy in the rear. Victory was practically within their grasp but Misr Tej Singh let it slip away treacherously. The battle-eager soldiery was bewildered. A Nihang Singh virtually drew his sword, rushed upto Misr Tej Singh and questioned him to explain his order, on which he joined the palms of his hands together and, with the greatest humility, explained that he was doing this in the interest of the Khalsa, as he sincerely wished to attack the enemy from the rear. The soldiers so mollified, quietly followed their treacherous General. At that moment they discovered that, in the same manner, their Commander, Raja Lal Singh, had earlier decamped at Ferozeshah, the preceding night. It did not take Hugh long to appreciate that the two Misrs Lal Singh and Tej Singh[58] had fulfilled their treacherous undertakings and he ordered his troops to make another attack on Ferozeshah. The Khalsa, who had expected Misr Tej Singh to relieve them, were taken by utter surprise. They fled from their entrenchments, abandoning their guns, besides 80,000 Ibs. of gunpowder and other stores. Such was the sad end of the battle of Ferozeshah – a battle really won by the Khalsa but lost by their traitorous commanders. A tall massive Memorial, in the outskirts of that village, to the West of the Rajasthan Canal Feeder, on the Ludhiana-Ferozepur Border road, only about ten miles from Ferozepur, completed in early 1976, stands magnificently in commemoration of the brave and valiant Punjabis who laid down their lives for defending their country and race, despite the treacherous acts and conduct of their leaders. It was hard to swallow the news that soon after the debacle; Misr Tej Singh[59] visited the British camp and had an interview with Henry Hardinge- the *Tunda Lat*[60] – to seek his blessings.

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Colonel Malleson remarked that the battle of Ferozeshah 'was a battle gained after it had been lost, and then regained after its success once more had been imperiled. Trotter[61] stated that three days after the battle of Mudki, 'began at Pherushahr that long, changeful and bloody fight, on which, for many hours, the fate of India may be said to have hung.' General Havelock observed: "Another such action will shake the Empire." The list of casualties in this great battle showed how stubborn the fighting between the British and Khalsa forces were. The Duke of Wellington, writing to Hugh Gough, lamented the heavy losses suffered at Ferozeshah but added: 'Long experience has taught me that such achievements cannot be performed, and such objects attained as in these operations without great loss, and that in point of fact the honour acquired by all is proportionate to the difficulties and dangers met and overcome.'

(C) MERCY IN THE BATTLEFIELD

General Sir Charles Gough and Arthur D. Innes[62] gracefully gave an instance of humanity on the part of the brave Sikhs, while the hostility continued between the opposing forces in the battlefield of Ferozeshah. "Lieutenant F. Sievwright, an officer of His Majesty's 9th Foot, had been dangerously wounded in front of the Sikh battery, and lay all the night in dreadful anguish on the field with a shattered leg, helpless and unable to move. At daylight, finding that the Sikhs were cutting up the unprotected wounded, he managed to drag himself some short way further off. Seeing, a Sikh soldier approaching, Sievwright grasped his pistol and challenged him, to his relief, the Sikh replied – "Salaam, Sahib." Seeing that he was clearly kindly disposed, Sievwright called him up; the man sat down beside him and, after some conversation, it was arranged that the Sikh soldier should carry him to the nearest soccour. This good Samaritan took his wounded foe on his back and carried him, at the peril of his own life, some two miles to the rear, where he met a *Doli*, in which the injured was placed, and conveyed to Ferozepur. Acts of kindness between enemies have often been heard of on a battlefield, but never one that could surpass this. So much so that the Sikh remained with the Lieutenant and tended him in the hospital. Such humane acts are inherited by the Sikhs from Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru."

(D) DEFECTIONS INDUCED

The Governor General bent upon occupying the Sikh Capital, in the first instance, resorted to all possible means. To induce wholesale defection and enticement of the *Poorbeas,* on sale, from the Sikh army, he issued the following Proclamation on December 25, 1845, offering to the deserters assurance of rewards and pensions, besides guaranteeing immediate decision of their lawsuits, to which they might be parties, pending in courts of British India:

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(E) PROCLAMATION IN HINDUSTANI

"Whereas the English Government is anxious to reward the bravery and fidelity of the *Poorbeas,* by raising a Regiment of them – it is hereby proclaimed, that any non-commissioned officer or soldier of the Lahore Government who shall present himself before His Excellency the Governor General, shall be immediately rewarded with the accustomed liberality, and shall have the benefit of invalid pension; and, if engaged in a lawsuit in a British court of Justice, his case shall be immediately decided before any other. In fact, every opportunity of favour and cherishment shall at all time be kept in sight by the Government. However, it is reported that Tej Singh has given out, that if any sepoys of the Lahore army go over for service to the English Government, the officers of this Government will cut off their noses and ears and kill them. This is altogether an infamous falsehood – for the customs of this Government were never of such a description, and never will be therefore let such a falsehood not enter their head; but let them feel assured that if they come here, they will be well rewarded."(A True Translation)

H. Marsh, Bt. Captain,
Interpreter and Quarter Master,
3rd Cavalry

(F) SABRAON - WATERLOO OF INDIA, FEBRUARY 10, 1846

In two fiercely contested encounters between the British and the Khalsa at Baddowal[63], (January 21, 1846) about 6 miles from Ludhiana on the Ferozepur road, and at Aliwal (January 28, 1846) in the present Sidhwan-Bet Block of Jagroan Tehsil, the Khalsa gave evidence of their devotion to their cause. According to Colonel G.B. Malleson,[64] the Sikhs 'Knelt to receive the dashing charge of the British Lancers and their Indian comrades; but as these approached, they instinctively rose and delivered their 'fire'. Beneath the charge that followed, they did not show any inclination to yield, nor was it till they had three times been ridden over, that they gave way. The Sikh army was commanded by Ranjodh Singh, Arjan Singh Ranghar, Nagalia and Lal Singh Moraria. After the battle, it was found that the ground was more thickly strewn with the bodies of the British[65] horsemen than of the Sikh infantry. Captain Humbley of King's Lancers wrote about the Sikhs in that battle, 'although beaten, they were not dismayed, and though their leader was the first to fly and quit the field, their courage never quailed'.

The last[66] encounter at Aliwal took a heavy toll of the Sikh armament and the initiative passed out of their hands to the enemy. Still the British had learnt about the 'toughness' of their adversaries the valiant Khalsa and reinforcements of men and officers of known repute were immediately called for from all over British India, besides asking John Lawrence to supply ammunition from the Delhi Magazine without delay. All this time Gulab Singh Dogra[67], who could have brought forty thousand men by a mere sign of his finger, was being vainly implored by the Sikhs to aid them, but

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he had a difficult and critical game[68] to play. The army even offered to make him the Maharaja and to kill the arch traitors, Lal Singh and Tej Singh. Fortunately, for the British, he did not throw his lot with the Sikhs and went a step further than the two Misrs. He remained at Jammu cajoling the whole of the leading *Panchayats* of the Sikh army, affecting to see every visitor from the battle at any moment, whether he be bathing or eating, as if his whole heart was with the Sikhs.

However, no provision reached the battlefields. The Khalsa army had traitors to lead it at the front and traitors in the rear to stab it in the back. The unfortunate Sikhs were hurried on to their fate, and were literally starved for want of rations. They had to send a deputation of 500 picked Sikhs to Lahore to urge the dire necessities of the army – for three days they had to live upon grain and raw carrots only. Rani Jindan "in answer to the urgent and loud complaints of the sacrifice to which the army was exposed, said that Gulab Singh forwarded vast supplies! 'No, he has not,' roared the deputation; 'we know the old fox: he has not sent breakfast for a bird (*Chiria-ki-haziri).*' Further parley ensued, the tempers of both parties waxing wroth. At last the deputation said, 'Give us powder and shot.' At this I saw some movement behind the *Purdah* (the little Dhulip was seated in front of it). I could detect that the Rani was shifting her petticoat; I could see that she stepped out of it, and then rolling it up rapidly into a ball, flung it over the screen at the head of the angry envoys, crying out, "Wear that, you cowards! I'll go in trousers and fight myself." The effect was electric. After moment's pause, during which the deputation seemed stunned, a unanimous shout arose, "Dhulip Singh Maharaja, we will go and die for his kingdom and the Khalsa *ji*." And breaking up tumultuously and highly excited, this dangerous deputation dispersed, and rejoined the army. The courage and intuition displayed by this extraordinary woman under such critical circumstances filled us all with as much amazement as admiration."[69] In return for a solemn guarantee for his hill possessions. 'The parties came to an understanding, according to J.D. Cunningham, that the Sikh army should be coming out in his true colours, Gulab Singh Dogra, leaving his Jammu abode, arrived at Lahore and opened negotiations with the enemy tendering his allegiance, attacked by the British, and when beaten, it should be abandoned by its own government[70] and, further, that the passage of the Sutlej should be unopposed and the road to the capital laid open to the victors. So, under such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason, the decisive battle of the campaign was fought at Sobraon[71] that is situated to the south of the Sutlej. Sobraon was the last battle of the First Anglo-Sikh War. Misr Lal Singh had played a leading part in the battle of Mudki and Ferozeshah and it was now the turn of Misr Tej Singh and Gulab Singh Dogra. On February 7, 1846, it began to rain cats and dogs and, for the next two days, the sun was not seen, the sky remaining overcast and the downpour continuing

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unabated. The Sutlej, within forty-eight hours, rose above seven inches making all the fords unaffordable, one rickety pontoon bridge however connecting the army entrenched on the left bank with its base. On the evening of February 9, Hugh Gough marched out of Ferozepur and successfully surrounded the Khalsa at Sabraon. Raja Lal Singh was re-imposed on the Khalsa. He had sent, two days ere, Shamas-ud-din Khan[72] to Major Lawrence with detailed information regarding the disposition of the Khalsa[73]. Darkness all over facilitated the British to seize the best opportunity. On the morning of February 10, a heavy mist spread from the river over the rain-sodden fields, enveloping both the armies. The sky having cleared, the British artillery took the initiative but the Khalsa guns were also quick to reply. The plain reverberated with the crash of the heavy guns on both sides. The guns, facing each other, continued barking with equal vigour and, for a time, the roar of artillery was unbroken. It had been intended that the cannonade should be continued for four hours before the Infantry were called upon to make their advance, but so rapidly did the gunners work their pieces that the ammunition carried with them was becoming exhausted long before that time had elapsed, and the elephants who should have brought up reserve had become unmanageable from their terror at the tremendous din. The round shot exploded tumbrills, or dashed heaps of sand into the air; the hollow shells cast their fatal contents fully before them, and the devious rockets sprang aloft with fury to fall hissing amid a flood of men; but all was in vain, the Sikhs stood unappalled, and "flash for flash, and fire for fire." Hand to hand encounters ensued with the Khalsa Infantry advancing in all directions. A large number of British soldiers were killed and Robert Dick himself mortally wounded. Henry Hardinge, who was almost a cripple having been severely bruised by a fall from a horse two weeks earlier, came to the field of Sabraon and commanded his men to rally. No sooner were the words uttered, than Colonel Wood, his aide-de-camp, galloped to the centre of the line, and seizing the colours from the hands of the ensign, carried them to the front. The men who joined him stormed the Sikh breastwork and engaged in hand to hand fighting, so desperate on both sides, that the trenches were soon filled with dead and dying. This was nothing short of a brutal bull dog fight. The brave Khalsa, with national zeal, fought fiercely for every inch of ground but the traitor, Misr Tej Singh, instead of leading fresh men to sustain the failing strength of the troops on his right, took to flight on the first assault, like a *Lunda-Kutta.*[74] He not only intended to desert himself but had even tried to induce other Sardars to do likewise. He felt greatly nervous, lest the Attariwala Sardar's patriotism and bravery should upset their treacherous plans. He meekly counseled him to fly with him, but when the noble patriot and a devoted follower of Guru Gobind Singh refused, with scorn, to toe his treasonable line, he tauntingly remarked: 'If you are that brave, let's see you take an oath on the Granth.

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I know you will join me in the end.' Inspired by lofty ideals of patriotism, the grey-bearded Sardar, who had seen no escape from domestic anarchy or from foreign subjection, had made known his resolution to die in the first conflict with the British, and so to offer himself up as a sacrifice of propitiation to the spirit of Guru Gobind Singh and to the genius of his mystic commonwealth. 'Never,' replied the Attariwala Sardar, and swore that he would rather be killed than give way to the English. And he, faithfully stood by his oath. Dressing himself in pure white, as one devoted to death, and, like a hungry tiger, he went into the thick of the battle. On the other hand, the General commanding the Khalsa, Misr Tej Singh, hastily crossed the pontoon bridge to safety, sinking a boat in the middle of the bridge of communication.

The Attariwala Sardar had, before calling on all around him to fight for the Guru, who had promised everlasting bliss to the brave, dismissed his syce[75] and told him to return to his village, Attari: 'Tell them that Sham Singh will not be coming home.' Having mounted his white sturdy horse, he was present everywhere urging the Sikhs – the True sons of the Khalsa – to fight bravely and desperately, and, awakening them to a sense of their duty, to die rather than turn their backs on the enemy. At last he, scorning death, spurred forward against the 50th regiment, waving his sharp-sparkling sword and calling for his men to follow him. Some fifty of them who obeyed the call, were driven back into the swirling river, and the brave Sardar fell a martyr from his horse pierced with as many as seven balls, on a heap of his slain countrymen. Thus, saw the battlefield of Sobraon the basest treachery of the opportunists, on the one hand, and the shining heroism of noble patriots, on the other.[76] His memory is held in the greatest esteem by his countrymen to this day. People were gratified to find when, after the battle, the servants of the Sardar found the dead body 'where the dead lay thickest'. While the Sardar fell martyr, according to J.D. Cunningham, "Other might be seen standing on the ramparts amid showers of balls, waving defiance with their swords, or telling the gunners where the fair-haired English pressed thickest together. Along the stronger half of the battlements, and for the period of half an hour, the conflict raged sublime in all its terrors. The parapets were sprinkled with blood from end to end; the trenches were filled with the dead and the dying. Amid the deafening roar of cannon, and the multitudinous fire of musketry, the shouts of triumph or of scorn were yet heard, and the flashing of innumerable swords was yet visible; or from time to time exploding magazines of powder threw bursting shells and beams of wood and banks of earth high above the agitated sea of smoke and flame which enveloped the host of combatants, and for a moment arrested the attention amid all the din and tumult of the tremendous conflict. But, gradually each defensible position was captured, and the enemy was pressed towards the scarcely fordable river; yet, although assailed on either side by squadrons of horse and battalions of foot, no

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Sikh offered to submit, and no disciple of (Guru) Gobind Singh asked for quarter. They everywhere showed a front to the victors, and stalked slowly and sullenly away, while many rushed singly forth to meet assured death by contending with a multitude. The victors looked with stolid wonderment upon the indomitable courage of the vanquished, and fore bore to strike when the helpless and the dying frowned unavailing hatred. But the warlike rage, or the calculating policy of the leaders, had yet to be satisfied, and standing with the slain heaped on all side round them, they urged troops of artillery almost into the waters of the Sutlej to more thoroughly destroy the army which had so long scorned their power. No deity of heroic fable received the living within the oozy gulphs of the oppressed stream, and its current was choked with added numbers of the dead and crimsoned with the blood of a fugitive multitude.'[77]

'Such is the lust of never dying fame.'

A British defeat was again "turned into a victory by the convenient flight of Tej Singh who damaged the bridge of boats over the Sutlej on his way and so helped to drown a large number of his countrymen."[78] The vengeance of the British was complete. With Sham Singh Attariwala, fell the bravest of the Sikh Generals, Gulab Singh Gupta, Hira Singh Topee, Kishan Singh[79], Mubarak Ali and Shah Niwaz Qasuri. Most of the others leapt into the swirling waters[80] and were drowned; thus nearly ten thousand brave Punjabis, burning with love for national independence, were killed in this action at Sobraon. All their guns were either captured or lost in the river. G.A. Henry wrote:

> "In these and the preceding fights, all the picked regiments of the regular infantry had been destroyed or dispersed, and two hundred and twenty of their guns captured."[81]

British losses were no lesser than the Khalsa as 330 officers and soldiers, including General Robert Dick of Waterloo fame, Brigadier Generals McLaren and Taylor, Major Fisher of the Sirmur battalion and Captain Warren, were killed and 2083 men wounded. Not since the battle of Buxar in 1764, when the dead of Mir Kasim Shuja-ud-daulah's forces formed a mole over which the defeated survivors escaped, had there been such slaughter in India. Really, it was an awful scene, a fearful carnage.

The dead body of the martyr, Sham Singh Attariwala, was discovered where the dead lay thickest. His servants, who came all the way from Attari, placed the body on a raft and swam with it across the river. Three days later, the party reached Attari[82] the village situated on the Grand Trunk Road in between Lahore and Amritsar. The Sardar's widow, who knew of her husband's resolution not to survive defeat, had already immolated herself with the clothes which the *sardar* had worn on their wedding day. Her *samadhi*, along with that of her husband, is still to be seen outside the village of Attari.... Indeed Sardar Sham Singh proved himself a 'prince among patriots.'

(F) The Brave Punjabis

General Sir Joseph Thackwell[83], who had personally led his dragoons in the

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battle, wrote: "It is due to the Sikhs to say that they fought bravely, for though defeated and broken, they never ran, but fought with their *talwars* to the last and I witnessed several acts of great bravery in some of their Sirdars and men." Henry Hardinge, Governor General, who, alongwith Hugh Gough was rewarded with Peerage, had seen the action. Arthur Hardinge[84] wrote: "Few escaped; no one, it may be said, surrendered. The Sikhs met their fate with the resignation which distinguished their race." Hugh Gough, the British Commander-in-Chief could not suppress his admiration of the bravery and resoluteness of Sikhs and paid rich tribute to the Punjabis: "Policy prevented me publicly recording my sentiments of the splendid gallantry of a fallen foe, and I declare, were it not from a conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body." The bard, Shah Mohammad immortalised the heroic stand of the men of Sham Singh Attariwala at Sobraon, thus:

"They squeezed the blood out of the whites
as one squeezes juice out of a lemon;
If only Ranjit Singh were there,
he would have been proud to see how the Khalsa wielded their swords."

About the sad result of the campaign, he wrote:

"Oh Shah Mohammad, without Ranjit Singh, such was our plight we won the battles but lost the fight."

The traitors to the Khalsa were not only taken note of by the British or the Khalsa themselves, but were immortalised in doggerel verse punning on their names:

'Lallu dee lallee gaee, Teju da gia tej
Ran vich pith dikhai ke modha aie pher."

(Lallu lost the blush of shame, Teju lost his luster by turning their backs in the field, they turned the tide and battle yield.)

Darbar in Lahore Fort for Treaty – March 9, 1846

After the defeat of the Khalsa, mainly due to the treachery of their leaders, the British forces triumphantly crossed over the pontoon bridge at Ferozepur and Lahore. In February 1846, Charles Viscount Hardinge had opened his mind about his aims and objects and the measures necessary for their attainment, in the letter addressed to the Secret Committee thus:

'A diminution of the strength of such a warlike nation on our weakest frontier seems to me to be imperatively required. I have therefore determined to take a strong and fertile district between the Sutlej and the Beas. This will cover Ludhiana and bring us within a few miles of Amritsar, with our back to the Hills. In a military sense it will be very important – it will weaken the Sikhs and punish them in the eyes of Asia. I shall demand one million and a half in money as compensation; and if I can arrange to make Gulab Singh and the Hill tribes independent including Cashmere, I shall have weakened this

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warlike republic. Its army must be disbanded and reorganised. The numbers of the artillery must be limited. The Maharaja must himself present the keys of Govindgarh and Lahore, where the terms must be dictated and signed.'

Gulab Singh Dogra was acceptable to the British, as he had also toed the line of treachery to his masters. So all these measures were immediately carried into effect by treaty dated. March 9, 1846 and agreement dated. March 11, 1846 signed by helpless seven and half years old Maharaja Dalip Singh, besides Bhai Ram Singh real nephew of the traitor Misr Tej Singh and agent of Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Lal Singh and Misr Tej Singh who had played the role of traitors in the Anglo-Sikh War, and four others who were associated with them to keep up appearance of the representative character of the signatories. "These ready instruments of our policy" and "the betrayers of their country", wrote Sir Claude Wade, "were not representing the nation." Thereafter, Gulab Singh Dogra was declared the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir for his services to the British Government under treaty dated March 16, 1846. The same are:

Articles of Treaty between the British Government and the State of Lahore: March 9, 1846

Article 1. There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part, and Maharaja Dhuleep Singh, his heirs and successors, on the other.

Art. 2. The Maharaja of Lahore renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to, or connection with, the territories lying to the south of the river Sutlej, and engages never to have any concern with those territories or the inhabitants thereof.

Art. 3. The Maharaja cedes to the Hon. Company, in perpetual sovereignty, all his forts, territories, and rights in the doab or country, hill and plain, situate between the rivers Beas and Sutlej.

Art. 4. The British Government having demanded from the Lahore state, as indemnification for the expenses of the war, in addition to the cession of territory described in Article 3, payment of one and a half crores of rupees, and the Lahore government being unable to pay the whole of this sum at this time, or to give security satisfactory to the British Government for its eventual payment, the Maharaja cedes to the Hon. Company, in perpetual sovereignty, as equivalent for one crore of rupees, all his forts, territories, right and interests, in the hill countries which are situate between the rivers Beas and Indus including the provinces of Cashmere and Hazara.

Art. 5 The Maharaja will pay to the British Government the sum of fifty lacs of

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rupees on or before the ratification of this treaty.

Art. 6 The Maharaja engages to disband the mutinous troops of the Lahore army, taking from them their arms; and His Highness agrees to reorganise the regular, or Ayeen regiments of Infantry, upon the system and according to the regulations as to pay and allowances observed in the ties of the late Maharaja Runjeet Singh. The Maharaja further engages to pay up all arrears to the soldiers that are discharged under the provisions of the articles.

Art. 7. The regular army of the Lahore state shall henceforth be limited to 25 battalions of infantry, consisting of 800 bayonets each, with 12,000 cavalry: this number at no time to be exceeded without the concurrence of the British Government. Should it be necessary at any time, for any special cause that this force should be increased, the cause shall be fully explained to the British Government, and when the special necessity shall have passed, the regular troops shall be again reduced to the standard specified in the former clause of this article.

Art. 8 The Maharaja will surrender to the British Government all the guns thirty-six in number, which have been pointed against the British troops and which, having been placed on the right bank of the river Sutlej, were not captured at the battle of Sobraon.

Art. 9. The control of the rivers Beas and Sutlej, with the continuation of the latter river, commonly called the Ghara and the Punjnud, to the confluence of the Indus from Mittunkote, and the control of the Indus from Mittunkote to the borders of Baloochistan, shall in respect of tolls and ferries, rest with the British Government. The provisions of this article shall not interface the passage of boats belonging to the Lahore government on the said rivers for the purposes of traffic or the conveyance of passengers up and down their course. Regarding the ferries between the two countries respectively, at the several ghats of the said rivers, it is agreed that the British Government after defraying all the expenses of management and establishments, shall account to the Lahore government for one-half of the net profits of the ferry collections. The provisions of this article have no reference to the ferries on that part of the river Sutlej which forms the boundary of Bahawulpore and Lahore respectively.

Art. 10. If the British Government should, at any time, desire to pass troops through the territories of His Highness the Maharaja for the protection of the British territories, or those of their allies, the British troops shall, on such special occasion, due notice being given, be allowed to pass through the

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Lahore territories. In such case, the officers of the Lahore state will afford facilities in providing supplies and boats for the passage of the rivers, and the British Government will pay the full price of all such provisions and boats, and will make fair compensation for all private property that may be endamaged. The British Government will moreover observe all due consideration to the religious feelings of the inhabitants of those tracts through which the army may pass.

Art. 11. The Maharaja engages never to take or retain in his services any British subject, nor the subject of any European or American state, without the consent of the British Government.

Art. 12. In consideration of the services rendered by Raja Golab Singh, of Jammoo, to the Lahore state, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British governments, the Maharaja hereby agrees to recognise the independent soverignty of Raja Golab Singh in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Raja Golab Singh by separate agreement between himself and British Governmet, with the dependencies thereof, which may have been in the raja's possession since the time of the late Maharaja Khurruk Singh, and the British Government, in consideration of the good conduct of Raja Golab Singh, also agrees to recognise his independence in such territories, and to admit him to the privileges of a separate treaty with the British Government.

Art. 13. In the event of any dispute or difference arising between the Lahore state and Raja Golab Singh, the same shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and by its decision on the Maharaja engages to abide.

Art. 14. The limits of the Lahore territories shall not be, at any time, changed without the concurrence of the British Government.

Art. 15. The British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore state, but in all cases of questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor General will give the aid of his advice and good office for the furtherance of the interests of the Lahore Government.

Art. 16. The subjects of either state shall, on visiting the territories of the other, be on the footing of the subjects of the most favoured nation.

This treaty consisting of sixteen articles, has been this day settled by Frederick Currie Esq. and Brevet-Major Henry Montogmery Lawrence, acting under the directions of the Right Hon. Sir Henry, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government, and by Bhae Ram Singh, Raja Lal Singh, Sirdar Tej Singh, Sirdar Chuttur

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Singh Atareewala, Runjoor Singh Majethia, Dewan Deena Nath, and Fakeer Noor-ud-Deen, on the part of the Maharaja Dhuleep Singh and the said treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, and by that of His Highness Maharaja Dhuleep Singh.

Done at Lahore, this 9th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1846, corresponding with the 10th day of Rubbee-ul-awul, 1262 Hijree and ratified on the same date.

Maharaja Dhuleep Singh (L.S.), Bhae Ram Singh (L.S.), Raja Lal Singh (L.S.), Sirdar Tej Singh (L.S.), Sirdar Chuttur Singh Atareewala (L.S.), Sirdar Runjoor Singh Majethia (L.S.), Dewan Deena Nath (L.S.), Fakeer Noor-ud-Deen (L.S.), H. Hardinge (L.S.), F. Currie, H.M. Lawrence

Articles of Agreements concluded between the British Government and the Lahore Darbar, on the March 11, 1846

Article 1. The British Government shall leave at Lahore, till the close of current year, A.D. 1846, such force as shall, seem to the Governor-General adequate for the purpose of protecting the person of the Maharaja and the inhabitants of the city of Lahore, during the reorganisation of the Sikh army, in accordance with the provisions of article 6 of the treaty of Lahore. That force to be withdrawn at any convenient time before the expiration of the year, if the object to be fulfilled shall, in the opinion of the durbar, have been attained; but the force shall not be detained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year.

Art. 2. The Lahore Government agrees that the force left at Lahore for the purpose specified in the foregoing article, shall be placed in full possession of the fort and city of Lahore, and that the Lahore troops shall be removed from within the city. The Lahore government engages to furnish convenient quarters for the officers and men of the said force, which may be incurred by the British Government all the extra expenses, in regard to the said force, which may be incurred by the British Government, in consequence of their troops being employed away from their own cantonments and in a foreign territory.

Art. 3. The Lahore Government engages to apply itself immediately and earnestly to the reorganization of its army, according to the prescribed condition and to communicate fully with the British authorities left at Lahore as to the progress of such reorganisation, and as to the location of the troops.

Art.4. If the Lahore Government fails in the performance of the conditions of the foregoing article, the British Government shall be at liberty to withdraw

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the force from Lahore at any time before the expiration of the period specified in article 1.

Art. 5. The British Government agrees to respect the *bona fide* rights of those *Jagirdars* within the territories ceded by articles 3 and 4 of the treaty of Lahore, dated 9th instant, who were attached to the families of the late Maharaja Runjeet Singh, Khurruk Singh and Sher Singh and the British Government will maintain those Jagirdars in their *bona fide* possessions during their lives.

Art. 6. The Lahore Government shall receive the assistance of the British local authorities in recovering the arrears of revenue justly due to the Lahore Government from their provisions of articles 3 and 4 of the treaty of Lahore, to the close of the Khurreef harvest of the current year, viz 1902 of the Sumbut Bikramajeet.

Art. 7. The Lahore Government shall be at liberty to remove from the forts in the territories specified in the forgoing article all treasure and state property with the exception of guns. Should, however, the British Government desire to retain any part of the said property they shall be at liberty to do so, paying for the same at a fair valuation, and the British officers shall give their assistance to the Lahore Government in disposing on the spot of such part of the aforesaid property as the Lahore Government may not wish to remove and the British officers may not desire to retain.

Art. 8. Commissioners shall be immediately appointed by the two Governments to settle and lay down the boundary between the two states, as defined by article 4 of the treaty of Lahore, dated March 9, 1846.

Maharaja Dhuleep Singh (L.S.), Bhae Ram Singh (L.S.), Raja Lal Singh (L.S.), Sirdar Tej Singh (L.S.), Sirdar Chuttur Singh Atareewala (L.S.), Sirdar Runjoor Singh Majethia (L.S.), Dewan Deena Nath (L.S.), Fakeer Noor-ud-Deen (L.S.) H. Hardinge (L.S.), F. Currie, H.M. Lawrence

Treaty between the British Government and Maharaja Golab Singh, concluded at Amritsar on March 16, 1846

Article 1. The British Government transfers and makes over, for ever, in independent possession, to Maharaja Golab Singh, and the heirs male of his body, all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situate to the eastward of the river Indus, and westward of the river Ravi, including Chumba and excluding Lahoul, being part of the territory ceded to the British Government by the Lahore state, according to the provisions of article 4 of the treaty of Lahore, dated 9th March 1846.

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Art. 2. The eastern boundary of the tract transferred by the forgoing article to Maharaja Golab Singh shall be laid down by commissioners appointed by the British Government and Maharaja Golab Singh respectively for that purpose, and shall be defined in a separate engagement after survey.

Art. 3. In consideration of the transfer made to him and his heirs, by the provisions of the foregoing articles, Maharaja Golab Singh will pay to the British Government the sum of 75 lacs of rupees (Nanukshahi), 50 lacs to be paid on ratification of this treaty, and 25 lacs on or before the lst of October of the current year, 1846.

Art. 4. The limits of the territories of Maharaja Golab Singh shall not be at any time changed without the concurrence of the British Government.

Art. 5. Maharaja Golab Singh will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or questions that may arise between himself and the government of Lahore, or any other neighbouring state, and will abide by the decision of the British Government.

Art. 6. Maharaja Golab Singh engages for himself and heirs to join with the whole of his military force the British troops when employed within the hills, or in the territories adjoining his possessions.

Art. 7. Maharaja Golab Singh engages never to take or retain in his service any British subject, nor the subject of any European or American state, without the consent of the British Government.

Art. 8. Maharaja Golab Singh engages to respect, in regard to the territory transferred to him, the provision of articles 5, 6 and 7 of the separate engagement between the British Government and the Lahore durbar, dated March 11, 1846.

Art. 9. The British Government will give its aid to Maharaja Golab Singh in protecting his territories from external enemies.

Art.10 Maharaja Golab Singh acknowledges the supremacy of British Government, and will, in token of such supremacy, present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve perfect shawl-goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls.

This treaty, consisting of ten articles, has been this day settled by Frederick Currie, Esq. and Brever-Major Henry Montgomery Lawrence, acting under the directions of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General, on the part of the British Government, and by Maharaja Golab Singh in person, and the said treaty has been this day ratified by the seal of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Hardinge, G.C.B., Governor-General.

Done at Amritsar, this 16th day of March, in the year of our Lord 1846,

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corresponding with the 17th day of Rubbee-ul-awul, 1262 Hijree.

Golab Singh (L.S.)
H. Hardinge (L.S.)
F. Currie
H. M. Lawrence

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– Avtar Singh Gill

REFERENCES

1. Governor-General of India.
2. He had only one arm-left.
3. Then also a border-town, 16 miles from Kasur and 50 miles from Lahore.
4. An important hill station, serving as a military resort, stands on the ridge overlooking Kalka and Chandigarh, at height of 6,332 feet.
5. A sacred town in Uttar Pradesh on Delhi-Bombay railway line, captured by the British in 1803.
6. A village ten miles to the south-east of Jagraon and about four miles to the north west of Raikot, on Raikot Jagroan road. A huge Rest House at the place commemorates the arrival of the British Governor-General during the Anglo-Sikh War.
7. The British Political Agent – a famous war monger, who fell during the First Anglo-Sikh War. Looking at the dead body, Robert N. Cust had said: 'There lay he the Prime mover by many considered the cause, of this war now commencing. Part V. p. 49.
   George Bruce called him 'arrogant, pompous and bellicose', p. 85
8. Career of Major George Broadfoot. P. 284
9. Hugh Murray, *History of British India* (London) 1853, p. 695
10. George Campbell, *Memoirs of My Indian Career.*(1893)
11. Ibid
12. History of the Sikhs.
13. The Assistant and companion of Broadfoot, *Linguistic and Oriental Essays.*
14. *Memoirs of my Indian Career. (1893)*
15. Major G. C. Smyth ; *Prinsep's Runjeet Sing, p. 203*
16. J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs,* p. 298 -
17. Major G. C. Smyth- a personal friend and admirer of Broadfoot to whose memory he had dedicated his book, *'A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore.'* (1847)
18. Confidential Persian Office Diary of George Broadfoot, at Ludhiana- March 26, 1845
19. J. D.Cunningham, p 297 footnote
20. Viscount Hardinge (1891), p. 81
21. A weak and timid person.
22. Lal Singh and Tej Singh deliberately hung back, to assist the enemy.
23. Son of Dhanna Singh Malwai.
24. A small village in Samrala block of district Ludhiana, near Kot Panechan.
25. G. C. Smyth; Robert N. Cust; George Campbell; J. D. Cunningham; Burton.
26. A History of Reigning Family of Lahore. (1847)
27. Linguistic and Oriental Essays, London (1887) Part V, p. 46-7.
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28. A History of Reigning Family of Lahore.
29. Sikh State now a district in Haryana, annexed by the British in 1843.
30. Memoirs of my Indian career p. 73.
31. Ibid, p. 78.
32. Trotter, Hodson of Hodson's Horse p. 38.
33. Henry Hardinge to the Secret Committee dt. Dec. 31,1845; Charles Macfarlane-History of British India, p. 592.
34. Henry Hardinge to the Secret Committee dt. December 31, 1845.
35. Burton, *The First and Second Sikh Wars*, compiled for the General Staff, India (1911), quoting Broadfoot to Secretary to Government of India, on September 26, 1845.
36. George Campbell, *Memoirs*, p. 70.
37. Henry Hardinge to the Secret Committee dt. December 31, 1845.
38. Ganda Singh- Private Correspondence relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, p. 84.
39. Village now in Lahore district, but near the Indo-Pakistan border.
40. Big Village in Patti Sub-division in Bhikiwind block.
41. Assistant Agent.
42. Henry G. A., *Through The Sikh War*, p. 196.
43. Situated on Ludhiana-Ferozepur National Highway, near Ghall Khurd.
44. A village some 20 miles from Frozepur, in Ghall Khurd Block of Ferozepur district, on Faridkot-Zira-Amritsar road.
45. Major General, Quartermaster General of Queen's troops.
46. Major General of 3rd Infantry Divison.
47. Diwan Ajodhya Parshad, *Waqai-Jang-i-Sikham.*
48. George Bruce, *Six Battles for India, p. 127.*
49. He was hit in the thigh and his horse threw him at the same moment. He remounted but was shot through the heart and the arm. He, therefore, received a dusty answer to his quest for power and glory.
50. Napoleon's sword presented to Henry Hardinge in 1816 by the Duke of Wellington on the plains of Sedan (George Bruce).
51. Secretary to the Govt. of India, incharge of the Official Papers of the Govt. of India.
52. *The Career of Major George Broadfoot,* p. 395. *Life of General Sir Hope Grant,* p. 72, edited by H. Knollys.
53. An ass.
54. Personal Assistant to Major Broadfoot, and in charge of the records of the Agency.
55. *Linguistic and Oriental Essays,* VI, p. 48
56. Ferozeshah, near *Ghall Khurd.*
57. Prayer for safety.
58. Personal enemy of Colonel Gardner, who was the Commander of Rani Jindan's personal guard during the Anglo-Sikh War 1844-46.
59. Tej Singh Misr received a British pension and died in 1862- Christy campbell, p. 31 footnote.
60. He had only one arm left.
61. *Life of Nicholson,* London (1897).
62. *The Sikhs and The Sikh Wars* (1897).
63. In the Ludhiana block a small village. It formed headquarter of the Raja of Ladwa. Ladwa is situated in the present Kurukshetra district of Haryana.
64. *The Decisive Battles of India*(1888)

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65. Henry Smith, a veteran of the battle of Waterloo, who was worsted at Baddowal on January 21, 1846, estimated his loss at 150 killed and about 200 wounded, in the clash lasting 200 minutes only.
66. Battle ended at 5-20 p.m.
67. He was appointed Prime Minister on January 26, 1846, a day before the battle of Aliwal.
68. He was playing a tricky double game with British and Sikhs. (George Bruce- pp.155-6).
69. *Soldier And Traveller- Memoirs of Alexander Gardner*(1898) Edited by Major Hugh Pearse.
70. The Khalsa was refused arms and ordered to stay where it was at Sobraon, more or less disowned by its Government. (George Bruce, p. 176).
71. Near Hari-ke-patan, in Ferozepur district, where there was a bend in the Sutlej and a Ford.
72. A confident of Misr Lal Singh.
73. William Edwards- *Reminiscences of a Bengal Civilian* (1866) p. 99. Broadfoot stated that sketch of the Sikh entrenchments was also sent.
74. Meaning, a dog with his tail cut, an expression used with contempt for a traitor.
75. Employee.
76. Dr. Andrew Adams.
77. *A History of the Sikhs (London) 1849.*
78. Hesketh Pearson, The Hero of Delhi, p. 80.
79. Second son of Jamadar Khushal Singh.
80. Robert N. Cust recorded that the stream was choked with the dead and dying- the Sandbank were covered with bodies floating leisurely down. It was an awful scene, a fearful carnage.
81. *Through the Sikh War.*
82. But now situated on the Indian side of the Indo-Pakistan border.
83. *The Second Sikh War.* (London) 1851.
84. Son of the Governor General, who was an eye witness.

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27

SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR 1848-49

TREATY OF BHAROWAL[1] - DECEMBER 16, 1846

The condition of the Punjab, after the ratification of the Treaty of Lahore, March 1846, was like that of a patient who lay prostrate after intense bleeding and it needed fresh blood to revitalise its body politic. Raja Lal Singh's policies were positively irritating to the British Agent as well as to the Sikh Chiefs. Foolish and overbearing as he was, he did not try to conciliate the Sikh *sardars* and rally round himself all the disintegrating atoms of the Sikh polity. He, rather, treaded the path of a traitor and sought to enrich himself and increase his personal power at the expense of the old and faithful pillars of the State. Besides the Darbar and the Sikh aristocracy, the Raja was distasteful to the Sikh people as well, owing to his treacherous conduct during the First Anglo-Sikh War. Hira Singh Aulakh, the brother of Rani Jindan, was so disgusted with the conduct of the Raja in the Palace that he actually threatened him with serious consequences 'if he did not reform his ways.' Later on, in December 1846, the Raja was found guilty of inciting the rebellion in Kashmir and his conviction led to his deposition from the Ministry and the confiscation of all his *Jagirs*. Not a single shop was closed or plough laid aside during the trial, deposition or even removal of the Raja. With the exit of the Raja from the scene, Lahore politics took a dramatic turn. According to the terms of the Peace Treaty of Lahore, the British troops were to be withdrawn at the close of the year and the year was about to close. Under the guise of guardianship, Lord Hardinge sought to tighten the British grip on the Punjab and desired to carry on the Government of Lahore in the name of the Maharaja during his minority (a period of eight years) or for a limited period, placing a British Minister at the head of the Government, assisted by a Punjabi Council, composed of the ablest and most influential Chiefs. According to this arrangement, the power of

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the British Agent was to be unlimited. This plan was indeed a very ingenious one and the Governor General was determined to see that the Darbar accepted it with a broad smile. Veiled threats, artful persuasions, rewards[2] and even bribes, however, failed to produce the results so desired. The Governor General then hit upon a new contrivance; to give the impression that the British troops had begun to withdraw from the Punjab, and sham and pretended military movements were ordered. The correspondence between the Governor General and Frederick Currie on the subject left no doubt in the mind of the reader that diplomacy of Lord Hardinge was dexterous and the exertions of Frederick Currie were indefatigable, and they had employed every mean to secure the desired harvest. Contrary to expectations, the Chiefs piously succumbed to the Machiavellian tactics of the British and accepted the suicidal proposals. The British would not tolerate the overbearing Regent, Rani Jindan, for long and her removal from power was, therefore, the first condition laid down by the British for concluding the Treaty of Bharowal. Writing on December 7, 1846, from his camp across the Beas, Lord Hardinge instructed Frederick Currie, who was then negotiating the new Treaty at Lahore that, "in any agreement made for continuing the occupation of Lahore, her deprivation of power is an indispensable condition."[3] Preparatory to this step, Henry Lawrence had long been indulging in the usual game of slandering the Rani in dispatches to his government. A mock show was then staged on December 15, 1846 to get an honest expression of the wishes and opinions of the great body of chiefs[4], who during the boyhood of the Maharaja were natural representatives of the State: Strangely, the Mother of the Maharaja and of the Sikhs, and the accredited Regent of the State, whose stake in the settlement was greater than that of any other person, was deliberately kept out of the discussions. She began to realize the depth of the British designs on the Punjab and, in vain, tried to win over the *sardars* and unite them all together in a scheme of independent Government, of which she herself was to be the head. The Rani could not exert her influence on the Chiefs and failed to win the game. As directed, Currie delivered to the Chiefs, on December 15, 1846, the paper containing the 'only terms' on which the Governor General would consent to leave the British force in the Punjab. The terms were:

> "If solicited to aid in the administration of the Government during the minority of the Maharaja, the British Agent must have full authority to interfere in and to control all matters, in every department of the State for the benefit of all connected with the*Reasit* (State).
>
> "A British force would remain at Lahore for the protection of the city and country, in such position as the Governor General should think best adapted for the security of the force and, at the same time, for the convenience of the inhabitants of the town.
>
> "A fixed sum in monthly installments must be set apart from the revenues of the country for the maintenance of this force.

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"The Governor General must be at liberty to occupy any military post or fort with British soldiers who His Lordship may deem necessary for the security of the capital, or for maintaining the peace of the country."

Hardinge wrote to Frederick Currie that the lady should no longer exercise any power as Regent. The terms having been accepted unanimously, the Treaty was signed on December 16, 1846, not only rudely shaking the Rani out of her wits but, in substance, sealing her fate, the only place to be left for her being the quiet palace, *Zenana*, with a bait of a fictitiously large pension of a *lakh* and a half of *rupees* per annum.

Rani Deposed As Regent

This Treaty was to last till Maharaja Dalip Singh attained the age of sixteen years or the September 4, 1854. The Administration of the State was to be carried on by a Council of Regency, consisting of eight chiefs, which was to work under the control and guidance of the British Resident. The consent of each *sardar* having been obtained separately, the formal ratification of the Treaty of Bharowal was announced on December 26, 1846 by a grand salute of the British guns. Captain Trotter remarked: "...to any listener gifted with the statesman-like forecast, the salute must have sounded like the boom of minute guns over the grave of a once powerful nation. With the best of intentions, India's most peaceful Viceroy had now gone more than halfway, to annexing one more independent kingdom to an empire already overgrown."[5] Thus, the Treaty placed the Sikh Kingdom under the tutelage of the British Government. The Governor General became the guardian of young Maharaja and appointed Henry Lawrence as British Resident with full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the State, and Rani Jindan ceased to exercise the powers of regency. Deprived of political power and excluded from all affairs of the State by the totalitarian sway exercised by the Resident, Rani Jindan began to feel the impact of the foreign rule. She grew furious at being merely a passive spectator of events and made a determined bid to unite the Chiefs to retain her hold in State affairs. S.S. Thorburn,[6] wrote: 'Of the sufferers from our reluctantly grasped usurpation of power, the greatest was Rani Jindan. Not only had her Minister been deported as a traitor but she herself, until then supreme in the state, had been deprived of all share in the Government.' She could not swallow the humiliation meted out to her, and soon resolved to beard the lion in his own den as, being a patriotic and restless personality, she could not content herself with a life of ease and luxury. It was for this decision, which she followed so determinedly, that Rani Jindan then occupied a unique place in history, her remaining years forming perhaps the noblest period of her otherwise tortured life.

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Rani Banished from the State

Rani Jindan, having been outwitted by British statesmanship, remained an embarrassment. Frederick Currie recommended, in his personal correspondence with the Governor General, that she be removed from Lahore, as, being woefully wronged by them, she began to acquire a sort of heroic mysticism. The Governor General replied: 'there is an objection to separate her from her son on the grounds of her political intrigues counteracting the measures of the new government, as it may be said that she is punished in anticipation of any political offence she has committed.' The first attempt to get rid of Rani Jindan was, therefore, made in February 1847. In her agony, she was looking for an opportunity to give a showdown to the enemy of the Sikhs. Thousands of retrenched Khalsa soldiers were roaming about, with shattered pride, and large number of chiefs were feeling that their Jagirs were either going to be reduced or altogether confiscated. The forts of all important chiefs were dismantled. The Sikhs, in general also felt rudely hurt by the attempts of British officials to enter the Golden Temple, Amritsar, with shoes on.

The British had also resolved to reward the national traitor Misr Tej Singh with the title of Raja of Sialkot and to confer titles of honour on fourteen other chiefs, who had rendered meritorious services to the British during the First Anglo-Sikh war and fixed at 8.17 a.m. on August 7, 1847, as the time and date for the ceremony in the Throne – Hall, in the fort of Lahore. On hearing this, Rani Jindan felt exasperated and, in a fury, ordered her young son, Maharaja Dalip Singh, not to apply Tilak on the forehead of the renegade – a *Lunda Kutta* as he was contemptuously called by the Sikh soldiers – betwixt whom and the Rani there reigned a bitter enmity. The Maharaja, then a child of nine years only, locked his small arms behind his back and shrunk back into his velvet chair, with a full determination foreign both to his age and gentle disposition and looked with defiance at the flittering throng of agitated men surrounding him.[8] Henry Hardinge wrote to Frederick Currie: 'He (the Maharaja) resolutely played his part, tucked his little hands behind him, threw himself back in his chair, and one of the priests performed the ceremony.'[9]

The Resident wrote to Henry Elliot that the 'little Prince is ignorant of the meaning of the airs taught to him; but if the same influence is to continue to mould his acts, he may some day call these his best *sardars* to account and even to take their lives.' He suggested that, to protect the Maharaja from the baneful influence and to shield the 'faithful' chiefs from 'a woman's revenge', Rani Jindan be banished from the Punjab. Rani Jindan was then locked on August 9, 1847 and, while in confinement in the Summum Tower of the Lahore fort, she addressed a stirring letter of protest to Henry Lawrence, the British Resident:

From Bibi Sahib (Rani Jindan) to Lawrence.

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I had entrusted my head to your care. You have thrust it under the feet of traitors. You have not done justice to me. You ought to have instituted an enquiry, and then charged me with what you found against me. You ought not to have acted upon what the traitors told you. You have kept no regard of the friendship of the great Maharaja. You have not even remained true to treaties and agreements.

Raja Lal Singh was true and faithful to me. He was loyal. Having leveled charges against him, you sent him away. Then I never said anything to you. We thought as Sahib himself was with us, we had no fear of anyone. We could never imagine that we would be put into prison with baseless charges concocted against us. Produce any writings of ours. Prove any charges against me. Then you could do anything you liked. Myself, the Maharaja and twenty-two maid servants are imprisoned in the Summun (Burj). All other servants have been dismissed. We are in a helpless condition. Even water and food are not allowed to come in. Now that you persecute us in this, it is better that you hang us instead of it. If you administer justice to us, well and good; otherwise I shall appeal to London headquarters. Even the allowance of one lakh and fifty thousand that had been fixed has not been paid by anybody. The amount of fifty-one thousand that I had spent in four months, I have paid to Missar Megh Raj after having sold my ornaments. I never begged for any thing from anyone. Having sold my ornaments, I was managing to live on. Why should you have caused me to be disgraced without any fault? What was the fault of Manglan that she too has been turned out?

The Maharaja came to me today and wept bitterly for a time. He said that Bishan Singh and Gulab Singh had been frightening him. If something happened to the Maharaja through fright, then what shall I do? He was told that orders of the Sahib for him were to reside in the Shalimar. He wept very bitterly when he heard this.

The treatment that is thus meted out to us has not been given to any ruling house. Why do you take possession of the kingdom by underhand means? Why don't you do it openly? On the one hand, you make a show of friendship and, on the other, you have put us in prison. Do justice to me or I shall appeal to the London headquarters. Preserve three or four traitors, and put the whole of the Punjab to the sword at their bidding.

(Seal)
Akal Sahai
Bibi Jind Kaur[10]

The British Resident was grinding his teeth since long and, he was not ready to let go this godsent opportunity to get rid of the only thorn that pricked him. The Governor General wrote:

"The banishment of the Rani which the Resident recommends in forcible terms would doubtless be the most effectual work of obviating all the present and future embarrassment which her presence and her control over her son cannot fail sooner or later to produce."

The real object of the British ran counter to what was detailed in the proclamation issued by the Resident on August 20, 1847, a day after the Rani was removed from Lahore. The original plan of the Rani to be deported out of Punjab had to be modified, though for

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a short time, as Henry Lawrence wrote to Henry Elliot at Calcutta: 'I believe the *sardars* were not prepared to take at once so decided a step at sending Her Highness across the Sutlej.' The decision to banish the Rani to the Fort of Sheikhupura, some twenty five miles from Lahore, was cleverly taken and the chiefs, duly domesticated and fully emasculated, bowed before the irrevocable decision of the East India Company.

The cruel decision to send Rani Jindan in exile having been taken, it was the desire of the Resident to separate the nine year old Maharaja from his Mother with 'as little pain as possible' as the Darbar was positively averse to any drastic measure. The young boy was always receiving the fondly caresses of his mother and would not miss her even for a while. He had no brother, no sister, no uncle and no father and no body was willing to or dare stand as a wall between the son and the mother. The Resident, however, cut the knot by hitting upon a plan to grab the son from his mother, even if he had to offend the Khalsa or receive the curse of the mother. The traitors were hand-in-glove with the British, and the day at last came, when the son was to be snatched from the affectionate arms of the mother. On August 19, 1847, at 6.00 p.m., a rough and rude push[11] was given to the Queen-Mother and the child was cruelly snatched from her in order to join the excursion party that was getting late. Elephants and *palkis* were brought in for herself and for all attendants and she was forthwith placed in *palki* and, with her female attendants, at 9.00 p.m., husted out[12] of the capital, under a strong military escort, after her only child was mercilessly torn from her, she spending the moments of her removal from Lahore in endless cries and wailings.

From August 20, 1847, to May 16, 1848, Rani Jindan was held in the ancient Fort of Sheikhupura, formerly used as a gaol for common felons, as being under arrest, under intolerable conditions. Her allowance of rupees one and half lakh was arbitrarily reduced to rupees forty-eight thousand per annum, as arbitrary punishment,[13] and all communications with the outside world were completely cut off. Within a few days of her arrival at Sheikhupura, the Rani made complaints of ill-treatment, even after depriving her of liberty to live in the kingdom of her late husband as she wished. She wrote:

"With the Grace of the Great Guru
From Bibi Sahib to Lawrence Sahib,

We have arrived safely at Sheikhupura. You should send our luggage with care. As I was setting in the Summan, in the same way I am in Sheikhupura. Both the places are same to me. You have been very cruel to me. You have snatched my son from me. For ten months I kept him in my womb. Then I brought him up with great difficultly. Without any fault you have separated my son from me. You could have kept me in prison. You could have dismissed my men. You could have treated me in any other way you liked. But you should not have separated my son from me.

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In the name of God, you worship, and in the name of king whose salt you eat, restore my son to me. I cannot bear the pain of this separation. Instead of this you put me to death.

My son is very young. He is incapable of doing anything. I have left the kingdom. I have no need of kingdom. For God's sake, pay attention to my appeals. At this time I have no one to look to. I raise no objections. I will accept what you say. There is no one with my son. He has no sister, no brother. He had no uncle, senior or junior. His father he has lost. To whose care has he been entrusted? Without any fault why is so cruelty being done to me?

I shall reside at Sheikhupura.[14] I shall not go to Lahore. Send my son to me. I will come to you at Lahore only during the days when you hold Darbar. On that day I will send him. A great deal (of injustice) has been done to me. A great deal (of injustice) has been done to my son also. You have accepted what other people have said. Put an end to it now. Too much has been done."

John Lawrence, Superintendent and Commissioner, Jalandhar Doab, and Acting Resident, Lahore wrote the reply to Rani Jindan, who chose to write him again thus:

"With the Grace of the Great Guru

From the Queen-Mother

Dated 16th Bhadon (August 30, 1847)

Your letter has been received. It is a matter of great pleasure that you remember me. I am very glad to learn from your letter that Maharaja is happy. Since the day I left Lahore, it is today that I have heard of the Maharaja being happy. Whatever you write may be true. But my mind does not believe that Maharaja is happy. How can he, whose mother has been separated from him, be happy? You call him Maharaja and then treat him like this. On the one hand, he is very young, on the other, he had never separated (from his mother). You are an intelligent and wise man. Think over it in your mind how the Maharaja can be happy. You write to me that on account of friendship between the two Governments you are very particular of the welfare of the Maharaja. How far you look to the welfare of the Maharaja is now well known all over the world.

Weeping, he was torn away from his mother and taken to Shalimar Garden, while the mother was dragged out by her hair. Well has the friendship been repaid. You never thought in your mind how the Maharaja, who was very young, could live (happily without his mother).

You had been kept for the protection of our honour and dignity, but the traitors have robbed us of these also. It is matter of sorrow that you did not weigh things before accusing me. You have exiled me on the instigation of traitors. Whatever you have done has earned a 'good' name for you! I have lost my dignity and you have lost regard for your word. The treatment that you have given to me is not given to murderers. Having renounced everything, I had become a Fakir, but you have not allowed me to live even like a fakir. I am very much hard up for money. I have sent Bandhujit to you. Keep him with you. Half of my luggage has been received by me. The other half, they do not give.

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Get that sent to me, and also get the allowance and have it sent to me."

On September 2, 1847, however, she was bluntly informed that:

i) the separation from her son was the deliberate act of the Governor General and would not be revoked;

ii) that during her Regency, she had brought the government of the Darbar, to the verge of ruin;

iii) that her conduct, since 1846, when on her appeal a British force had occupied Lahore, was of such a nature that it induced the Governor General no longer to entrust the Maharaja to be brought up under her tuition; and

iv) that it now remained for Her Highness to be resigned to the decision which was irrevocable during the Maharaja's minority.

In the end of that letter, the Governor General warned her that, 'if her acts, either by letter or by message, are of a nature to convince the Government that she is so reckless as to persevere in abusing the facilities which her present resident may afford, by attempting to excite discontentment and disturbance on account of the separation from her son, even the Governor General will not hesitate to take the next step of removing Her Highness out of the Punjab in the just exercise of the power vested in him by the late treaty.' This reply was a sufficient pointer to the Rani that the intentions of the British were not good. She had by now learnt how the subtle British had tried their luck ever since the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and had succeeded, to a greater extent, in meddling with the internal affairs of the Kingdom. She was no match for these powerful imperialists, but she earnestly made up her mind to continue to oppose them and to refuse to submit to even a grain of injustice. She wrote to Henry Lawrence: 'Surely, royalty was never treated in the way you are treating us! Instead of being secretly king of the country, why don't you declare yourself so? You talk about friendship and then put us in prison. You establish traitors in Lahore, and then at their bidding you are going to kill the whole of the Punjab.'[15]

Rani Exiled to Benaras

In her compulsory retirement to the Fort of Sheikhupura, near Lahore, the Rani's influence was almost extinguished. Very strict restrictions were imposed on her, when Sahib Singh, a representative of Misr Lal Singh, was found meeting the Rani secretly and he was severely warned against putting in an appearance near about Sheikhupura town. She sent her advocate, Jiwan Singh, to Calcutta to prefer an appeal to Lord Dalhousie and submitted a representation to the Secretary to the Government of India complaining of the cruel and unworthy treatment under which she was suffering. Governor General, refused to listen to him, except through the Resident.[16] Finding himself helpless, the Agent filed the following appeal to the Secretary on

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February 23, 1848 for at least modification of the Proclamation dated August 20, 1847:

> "The confinement in which the Ranee is now kept, is of the most close and rigid description. She is shut up in the fort of Sheikhupura, formerly used as a gaol for common felons, under the custody of those *sardars* from whose dangerous machinations against her own life, and that of her son, she first solicited the protection of a British force stationed at Lahore; all intercourse with her friends and advisors or even with the ministers of her religion is strictly prohibited, and the only attendants allowed her are a few female servants, not of her own selection, but appointed by her keepers. So penal is the nature of the treatment she undergoes, that she is not allowed even the privilege of choosing her own diet.
>
> "The friends of the Ranee now in Lahore, are so much intimidated that they dare not call the attention of the Resident to hardships which she suffers.' And, on the same behalf, I further request that the Resident at Lahore be directed to institute an investigation into the charges under which the Rani has been imprisoned, and to take down, and transmit to his Lordship in Council, the evidence of all witnesses which may be produced, in support or in rebuttal, of the accusation. His Lordship, in directing such investigation, will, no doubt, order that, under all precautions which may appear to him prudent, or necessary to prevent an abuse of the privileges, the Renee shall be allowed such intercourse with her friends and advisors as will enable her to plead her cause effectively."[17]

The Government had already made up its mind and, for political reasons, refused to institute an enquiry lest the Rani succeeded in establishing her innocence leading to an exposure of the British intentions and policies. And it was then determined 'to banish, imprison and plunder her without any trial at all'.[18] The unearthing of a conspiracy to corrupt the fidelity of the British troops at Lahore was made a plausible excuse for banishing the Rani from the Punjab. The Resident, however, declared that 'this is not a time for us to hesitate about doing what may appear necessary to punish state offenders, whatever may be their rank and station and to vindicate the honour and position of the British Government.' He continued: "I propose, therefore, that the Maharani be sent to Benaras under a strong guard; that she be allowed to take with her jewels and such of her property as she may immediately require, and her domestic servants. He suggested that 'at Benaras, she should be subject to such surveillance and custody' as will prevent her having intercourse with parties beyond her own domestic establishment, and holding correspondence with any person, except through Major McGregor, the Governor General's Agent." Without disclosing as to whither she was being escorted, she was taken to the suburbs of Lahore from where she was removed to Ferozepur. On May 23, 1848, the mother of the Sovereign and widow of the sincere ally of the British, was sent to Benaras and detained under the personal supervision of Major McGregor. She was strictly forbidden, to communicate with anybody in the Punjab, with a warning that, 'in case she would not abstain from

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practices and designs of a tendency to subvert the administration of the Punjab and injurious to the Maharaja or the British Government, it will in such case be necessary for the Government of India to cause the Maharani to be confined in the fortress of Chunar'. It was said that the further reduction in her allowance was made in consideration of the fact that the Rani was 'taking with her a very large amount of private property and jewels'. Still she was not allowed to remain in possession of her jewels and other private property very long. Shortly thereafter, the Rani had decided to escape from the Fort of Benaras. Major McGregor, the Personal Supervisor of the deposed Rani, had received a reliable information from Lahore that the Rani was still in constant touch with the army of the freedom fighters and was communicating with them through secret agents. Dalhousie wrote to John Hobhouse from Ferozepur, on March 24, 1849, that letters of a most ferocious and turbulent nature, concealed in amulets, from Rani Jindan to Chattar Singh Attariwala and Diwan Mool Raj have been captured from a horseman and, if found authentic, he would confiscate all her property and shut her up in the fort of Chunar.[19] The Agent of the Governor General felt alarmed and decided to remove her, for greater security, to the old red-stone Fort of Chunar, situate in the district of Mirzapur, a little beyond Benaras. The Rani protested and cried over this rigorous and inhumane treatment but the British were made of a different mould and they could not take even a little risk in joining her in distress. The prisoner Rani, with sixteen lady attendants, surrounded all the way by the British force, was hastily and stealthily moved to the fort of Chunar.

Rani Escaped to Nepal

On April 15, 1849, Captain Rees went round the Fort and, as usual tried to identify the prisoner by her voice. To his utter surprise, the voice this time from inside the cell of Pardanashin lady had 'slightly thickened' but, on enquiry, received the sugar-coated reply that it was due to 'cold she was suffering.' Major McGregor was soon informed about the affair. All was well till 4.00 A.M. on April 19, 1849, when the alarm was raised that the Rani was missing. Immediately, the Government of India was informed of the stunning event and all roads, bridges and routes in the region were closely and secretly checked, but no trace of the Rani could be found. A letter purporting to have been written by the Rani before her escape was found at the gate of the Fort, on April 19, 1949, in which she clearly stated that 'she had managed to escape not with the help of any of her attendants but with the help of a spell.' She also wrote:

> "You put me in the cage and locked me up. For all your locks and your sentries I got out by my magic.... I had told you plainly not to push me too hard... But don't think I ran away, understand well, that I escaped by myself unaided.... When I quitted the Fort of

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Chunar, I threw down two papers on my gudee and one I threw on the European Charpoy and woke your fine European out of sleep, now don't imagine, I got out like a thief."

From Chunar, she traveled on foot or in a boat and passing through villages Ramnagar, Fatehgarh, Jaunpur and Azamgarh, reached Patna, from where she traveled through the plains of Bihar and the southern slopes of the lofty Himalayas and the Terai region of Nepal, as a *bairagan* or *faqeernee* pilgrim on a visit to her ailing Guru in Nepal. Really a woman of Rani Jindan's resolute character and piercing intelligence could have succeeded in such a dangerous undertaking!

The sensational escape of the Rani from the impregnable Fort of Chunar, while under special guard and care, within forty-eight hours of her confinement there, caused a great commotion in British circles. Unfortunately, by that time, the kingdom had been annexed by the British. Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India, was literally dumbfounded but felt consoled that 'the scandalous carelessness which has now permitted her escape did not occur a few months ago; when her presence among the Sikhs in the Punjab, as the widow of Runjeet Singh, would have roused their enthusiasm and would have greatly encouraged and strengthened them.' It was, however, felt disgraceful that 'she should have been able to effect her escape from a fortress, such as Chunar, and from a British guard.' Anyway, the Governor General, in vengeance, issued the following instructions to Major McGregor at Benaras: that her nine *lakh* worth of jewels and all other property at Benaras be confiscated; second, that in case she had crossed the frontiers of British India, she was not allowed to draw her allowances; and third, that he should not enter into any communication with her without previous reference to the Government.

Mulraj as Governor of Multan

On death of Sawan Mal, his charge comprised the districts of Multan, Jhang, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan, together with portions of the district of Mianwali and a few sundry estates. The territory administered by the Diwan was estimated to yield annual revenue of thirty five *lakhs* of *rupees* for which he paid to the Lahore Government a sum of twenty three *lakhs*, the difference being allowed to meet expenses of management and his own emoluments. It was to this important charge that Mulraj succeeded his father in October 1844, and he was fully qualified for the post. From the very beginning, the task of Diwan Mulraj was beset with difficulties as a long-standing enmity existed between Hira Singh Dogra, Prime Minister, and the Diwan's family. The Dogra Prime Minister imposed a heavy *Nazarana* of about thirty *lakhs* on Mulraj for which the Diwan was much embarrassed and he opened negotiations with the Lahore Darbar. On December 21, 1844, Hira Singh

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Dogra was put to death and his successor, Jawahar Singh Aulakh, reduced the amount to eighteen *lakhs*, out of which part payment was made. On account of the first Anglo-Sikh War, the matter went worst when Raja Lal Singh became the Prime Minister. He was jealous of the position of the Diwan's family and he dispatched a force against the Diwan to realise the balance of the *Nazarana* as the revenue for the current year. In the encounter near Jhang, the Diwan easily defeated Misr Bhagwan Singh[20], cousin of the Prime Minister, and appealed for justice. Actually, the commercial potentialities of Multan had even attracted the attention of the British ever since the early thirties of the nineteenth century. To the Governor General, Henry Lawrence hinted at the desirability of ultimately placing Multan under British administration. Henry Lawrence wrote to Diwan Mulraj on September 15, 1846, that, if conditions imposed by the Darbar were distasteful, he could resign. Despotic and calculated actions of the British Resident had convinced the Diwan that the British did not mean fair play in the Punjab. Already by the Treaty of Bharowal, they had condemned the Regent, Rani Jindan, and usurped all the powers of the Darbar. The Diwan had also witnessed by now the ruthless policy pursued by the British administrators against all patriotic elements in the Lahore Kingdom and consequently, realised the absolute necessity of ridding himself of the new masters. Disappointed at the cold treatment, the Diwan tendered his resignation on December 18, 1847. The Resident was not prepared for so sudden a step on the Diwan's part and requested him to 'reflect well on the matter' and carry on the administration at least upto March 10, 1848. The Diwan yielded to the request, provided 'his resignation was kept a profound secret, until the winter revenue had been paid, otherwise he would have much difficulty in collecting it'. This promise was readily given. The Diwan undertook to instruct two British officers in the state of affairs before they took over charge of the administration of the country.

Resignation of Diwan Accepted

In March 1848, Frederick Currie was appointed as Resident at Lahore. Without paying any attention to the wishes of the Diwan, he betrayed his confidence and openly informed the Darbar of the Diwan's resignation. This irritated the Diwan, who wished to hand over charge quietly. Kahan Singh Maan, a nominee of the Council, was nominated as *Nazim* of Multan and Vans Agnew, a British Civil Servant, was chosen to accompany him nominally as a Political Agent, 'but in reality to assume the entire management of the country, and to introduce a new system of finance and revenue'. Since Agnew's duties would have been arduous and administration would have been really conducted by the British Agent, Lt. Anderson was appointed to assist him in Multan. Then the resignation of Diwan Mulraj was unceremoniously

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accepted on March 31, 1848.[21] No attempt was made either to conciliate the embittered Diwan or to gauge the popular feeling at Multan. To send against the expressed wishes of the Diwan, whose family ruled this province for over a quarter to replace him, was sure to provoke the people and soldiery of Multan who were decidedly averse to the change. The sending of Vans Agnew and Anderson to Multan at the time and in the manner selected, 'was very much like rolling a live shell, with a lit fuse into a well stored magazine, the chances being in favour of an explosion'.[22] Not only was the manner of relieving the Diwan of his charge imprudent but, as McLeod Innes wrote, 'none of the care and precaution was exercised that was obviously advisable in arranging to replace a troublesome Governor in a wild district. Lord Hardinge had assured his successor, Dalhousie, "It would not be necessary to fire a gun in India for seven years to come"[23] but this wishful forecast was disproved within three months, when the spark set off at Multan.

British Officers Arrived at Multan

The British officers, with a number of attendants, and Kahan Singh Maan marched by land and reached Multan on April 18, 1848. The new Governor-designate and the British officers took up their residence in the Idgah. The charge of the province having been formally transferred, the party set out on horseback to return to their camp. As the small procession emerged out of the Sikki gate of the Fort and was crossing the narrow drawbridge over the ditch, one Amir Chand Khatri, a soldier, attacked Agnew with a spear, wounding him on the left shoulder and inflicted two or more severe wounds on him and escaped. Fearing for his life and to bring force for defence, the Diwan pushed forward his horse and proceeded to his house. Almost at the same time, Anderson put his horse into a gallop, but five troopers started striking him with their swords. He was pursued by Afghans, Mazhabis and Sikhs, who wounded both him and his horse with their swords. On arrival in the Idgah, Agnew reported the serious occurrences to the Resident at Lahore. He sent four horsemen of Fateh Singh Maan with a letter to Dr. Wilkinson, coming in boat by the river, to come to Multan with all haste on horseback. He also sent express messages for assistance to Major Edwards, through a *harkara*, directing him to take the letter to Dera Ismail Khan and delivered to General Cortland. For this, he paid Rs. five to the harkara. In the meantime, the two Gurkha companies of his escort were turned out of the fort and they arrived in the Idgah. Agnew wrote to the Diwan expressing his disbelief in his participation, but asking him to seize the criminals and to come personally to the Idgah and control the rebels, but the troops did not permit communication between Diwan Mulraj and the British officers. On the other hand, in the Am-Khas, in the garden-house of Diwan Mulraj, the troops were in a state of great excitement in front of the garden-house. They

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had even fired a couple of shots on the messengers sent by Agnew to the Diwan. When Raizada Tulsi Ram returned from the Idgah, he found the Diwan 'a prisoner in the hands of his turbulent soldiery.' The freedom fighters had gathered together and, after some deliberations, invested the Diwan with leadership of the struggle for independence.

British Officers Now Murdered – April 20

Next morning, on April 20, 1848, on Thursday, Agnew sent the Maharaja's *Parwanas* to Mulraj's chiefs and officers, ordering them to obey him and the new Governor, but they refused to obey but Diwan Mulraj. Proclamations[25] were issued at about 7-00 a.m. in the name of the Diwan exciting the country to a general uprising. Some hours later, the guns of the fort as also at the Am-Khas commenced firing. The cannonade continued in a desultory manner throughout the day from both sides. The loss of life and property on either side was, however, but trifling.

After the sun had set, a mob of some thousand persons from the city, led by some hundred Nihangs, rushed into the Idgah with loud cries. The new Governor begged Agnew's permission to wave a sheet of white cloth and sue for mercy but he scorned the idea of asking for mercy and replied: 'The time for mercy has gone; let none be asked for. They can kill us two if they like, but we are not the last of the English, thousands of Englishmen will come down here, when we are gone and annihilate Mul Raj and his soldiers and his fort. 'With frantic shouts of *Boley So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*, the crowds now rushed in. One Godar Singh[26] Nihang came up to Vans Agnew, abused him: 'You scoundrel! and asked as to 'why have you come to Multan?' When he did not reply, the furious Nihang drew his *kirpan* and roared, "*Boley So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*" and slashed Agnew across the chest and hacked off his head. The frenzied mob then turned on Anderson and, with spears and swords, hacked him to bits. Godar Singh Nihang took the severed head of Agnew to Diwan Mulraj, and crying out. "*Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Wahiguru ji ki Fateh*", placed it before the Diwan. Godar Singh then took the head and threw it down before Sardar Kahan Singh Maan, in the garden of Am-Khas where he was confined, saying: "Here is the head of your son-in-law whom you brought here." The distressed Sardar started weeping and got up, but Diwan Mulraj reproached him for his sympathy with the foreigners.

Proclamations of Dharamyudh and Battle

The people of the neighbouring regions also came to Multan to join Mulraj. The Sikh troops issued an appeal to the Sikhs, Hindus to the Hindus and Muslims to the Muslims. The Sikh appeal was:

> "Now we, in accordance with the Guru's command, have written to all of you, our Khalsa brethren. Those of you, who are true and sincere Sikhs, will come to us here. You will receive pay, and will be received honourably in the Durbar of the Guru. The Maharaja

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Duleep will, by the Guru's grace, be firmly established in his kingdom; the cow and the Brahmin will be protected and our holy religion will prosper. All believing Sikhs, who trust in the Guru will place confidence in our words, and joining us, be received by the Guru and all his omissions and misdeeds will be pardoned by the Guru and his five *pyaras*. Forward copies of this manifesto to all our Sikh brethren, and delay not; for those who spread this intelligence will meet with the approbation of the Guru. You know that all are mortal, whoever, therefore, as becomes a sincerely believing Sikh, devotes his life to the service of the Guru, will obtain fame and reputation in this world. The Maharaja and his mother are in sorrow and affliction. By engaging in their cause, you will obtain their favour and support. Khalsa *ji*! Gird up your loins. Under the protection of the Guru and Guru Gobind Singh will preserve our honour. Make much of a few words. Dated 12th Baisakh, 1905 (April 22, 1848)".[27]

In a few days, the Doabs between the Ravi and the Chenab, and the Chenab and the Indus swarmed with Pathan and Baloch swordsmen. A general insurrection had begun. Led by counsels of despair and fanaticism and goaded on by the infuriated soldiery, Diwan Mulraj also issued a proclamation summoning all the inhabitants of the province to do their duty and drive the British from the land of the five rivers. This proclamation, calling upon the people to rise and liberate their country from foreign thraldom, created a stir in the placid water of Punjab politics. In fact, Dalhousie wanted to use the uprising by one man as a pretext and give it the appearance of a general rebellion by the Sikhs, and then annex the State of Punjab. Edwards, Assistant to the Lahore Resident, wrote to Major Hudson, the political Assistant of the Resident, on May 24, 1848.

"You hope we shall seize the opportunity to annex the Punjab. In this I cannot agree with you, for I think, for all that has yet happened, it would be both unjust and inexpedient. The treaty we made with the Sikh Government and people cannot be forfeited by the treachery of a Gorkha Regiment in Multan, the rebellion of a discharged Kardar or the treasonable intrigues of the queen mother who has no connection with the Sikh Government of her son."

Edwards again wrote to the Resident on June 29, 1848:

"I am afraid considerable mischief has been done by an idea of annexation getting abroad. It is my opinion that you are certainly running a great and unnecessary risk in waiting for the cold weather, and giving the Sikh army the temptation to rise, when by a mere march, the rebellion would now be settled."

Dalhousie, however, snapped Edwardes for his criticism in harsh and insulting words. Edwards wrote back to Frederic Currie. Resident: "I certainly did not expect to be insulted. He may command my services to their fraction, but to his censure and praise. I feel indifferent for the future."[28]

While Lord Dalhousie was calmly biding time till the Punjab abscess should come to a head and be lanced in the coming cold weather, and the Resident was

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impotently chafing at the exasperating coolness of the Commander-in-Chief, Herbert Edwardes, rose to the occasion and lost no time in setting about making the necessary preparations. After raising new levies, both horse and foot, he crossed the Indus with a strong army on April 24, 1848 and, pushed on like a triumphant Caesar and defeated the Diwan's forces at Kineri on June 18. The Diwan after this crushing disaster shut himself in the Fort of Multan.

Attariwalas Joined the Freedom Fighters

After the battle of Kineri, the Fort and City of Multan were all that remained in the possession of the freedom fighters. Both the town and the citadel were very strongly fortified, and it was not possible to reduce them without a regular besieging army. Herbert Edwards, therefore, lay in wait, occupying himself meanwhile in fortifying his position till the arrival of sufficient reinforcements from Lahore. On the other side, the arrival of Bhai Maharaj Singh in Multan decided the rank and file of the Sikhs to throw in their lot with the Diwan. This was what the British desired. They could now fan the spark of uprising and make it into a national conflagration, then drown it in blood and finally annex the state. The only obstacles were the chiefs led by the Attariwalas, who remained doggedly loyal to the Resident. They were particularly cautious in their dealing with them because they did not want to jeopardise the prospects of Dalip Singh becoming the sovereign or even demi-sovereign of the Punjab. The daughter of Chattar Singh Attariwala, the Governor of the North-Western Frontier districts, was engaged to marry Maharaja Dalip Singh.

Anti-British sentiments soon gathered force as the siege of Multan dragged on. Chattar Singh Attariwala, who had earned a lot of unpopularity with the masses for his condemnation of the Multan uprising suddenly found himself let down by his English subordinate, Captain James Abbot. There were persistent rumours that the British did not intend at all to honour their commitments about restoring the kingdom of Punjab to Maharaja Dalip Singh, when he came of age in the year 1854. The Sardar wrote to his son, who was then besieging Multan, to get Herbert Edwardes to write to the Resident and fix a date for the marriage of the Maharaja to his daughter, Bibi Tej Kaur. The policy of the British Government was clear; they did not want this matrimonial connection of the Maharaja with the family of the Sikh Chief of Punjab. Driven to desperation, the chagrined and humiliated Sardar had no other choice but to draw the sword with his feeble hands, and devote himself to one last struggle for his religion and the Khalsa Raj. With surprising alacrity, he opened negotiations with Dost Mohammad Khan of Kabul and offered him the valley of Peshawar. The Sikhs and Afghans made a common cause and, for the first time, all India saw the heartening spectacle of a united front against their common foe. Raja Sher Singh Attariwala, at the head of the Sikh troops, was then cooperating with Major General Whish in the

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siege operations against Diwan Mulraj. His adherence to the British exasperated the people and he was reviled as a Mussalman (the greatest reproach that can be cast upon a Sikh). Chattar Singh Attariwala wrote to his son, telling him of the way he had been slighted by upstart foreigners and exhorted him to join his countrymen in fighting them to the last, "Complaining bitterly of Abbot, whose suspicious and treachery had driven him to adopt military measure to guard his life and honour and asked him to join for defending the family honour and independence of his country."[29] This letter made the son extremely uneasy. The latter showed the letters to Herbert Edwards in the camp at Multan, discussed the matter with great good sense to him, but the British officer was bound, hand and foot, by the expansionist policy of the Governor General. For full three days, Sher Singh Attariwala was unable to make up his mind. Two years later, Edwardes wrote:

> "Impartial history is in my opinion bound to record this verdict, that Raja Sher Singh Attariwala was opposed to the Multan rebellion and the Second Sikh War, did what he could to stop them both, but failing, sided with his family and nation." An incident on September 13, 1848, finally convinced the Raja of the dishonesty of British intentions. That night he visited the British officers' Mess after dinner, as usual, and took his seat next to Herbert Edwards. Van Cortland, the officer in the employ of the Lahore Darbar, slipped out of the tent stealthily. A little later, an officer of the Raja's regiment rushed in and whispered in the Raja's ear that Van Cortland had ordered the mess tent to be surrounded by Pathan mercenaries. The Raja took a hurried leave and got away before Van Cortland's men could apprehend him. Next morning, the *sardar* and his troops left the British Camp and decided to join his insulted and degraded father. He issued the following proclamation[30] to the people of the Punjab:
>
> "It is well known to all the inhabitants of the Punjab, to the whole of the Sikhs, and those who have been cherished by the Khalsa ji and, in fact, to the world at large, with what oppression, tyranny and undue violence, the firanghees have treated the widow of the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh, now in bliss, and what cruelty they have shown towards the people of the country.
>
> "In the first place, they have broken the treaty, by imprisoning and sending away to Hindustan, the Maharani, the mother of the people. Secondly, the race of the Sikhs, the children of the Maharaja (Ranjit Singh) have suffered so much from their tyranny that our religion has been taken away from us. Thirdly, the kingdom has lost its former repute...."

The proclamation ended by urging the people of the Punjab in general and the Sikhs in particular to 'rise and unite for the purpose of destroying the British.' This proclamation had caused the greatest excitement. Counter proclamations by the Darbar and by other 'faithful' *sardars* did not make any marked effect on the spirits of the freedom fighters. For full three weeks, Sher Singh Attariwala tried to convince Diwan Mulraj that he had really broken with the British, but he refused to believe him. The

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suspicious Diwan withdrew all his soldiers within the walls of Multan and made the Raja's army take the places in the British front under the walls of the fort. Herbert Edwards had no small share in intensifying the feelings of suspicion in the mind of Diwan Mulraj. By means of a letter, which he contrived should fall into the hands of the Diwan, he conveyed to him the suspicion that the Attariwala Sardar was playing him false. In this letter, Edwardes pretended to be privy to a plot by which the Raja was to take the fort by stratagem. The gates of Multan fort remained firmly shut against the Attariwala, who was then heading some 5,000 troops, two mortars and ten guns. Although Major General Whish found it impossible to continue the siege and perforce abandoned the operations, the Attariwala Raja unfortunately failed to convince the Diwan of his bonafides at such a crucial moment of history. Disgusted at such distrust, on October 9, 1848, the Raja left Multan to raise the country and effect a junction with his father's forces. His departure from Multan opened the last act of the drama which had commenced nearly three years ago on the banks of the Sutlej.

Sher Singh Attariwala's Victories - Chillianwala, January 13, 1849

Sher Singh Attariwala was deserted by his two senior colleagues, Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia[31], and Attar Singh Kalianwala, holding the seat in the Council of Regency till the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, as they did not want to run the risk of losing their *Jagirs* by deserting the British. When the whole army of the Raja marched to Multan to join the forces of the Diwan, Attar Singh mounted his horse and fled to the camp of Edwardes with a few horsemen. His son, Lal Singh, was carried off by the troops, but three weeks later contrived to make his escape and joined Edwardes also; Kehar Singh Sandhanwalia also fled to the British camp on September 14, 1848. But his uncle, Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia, while getting ready to escape, was surrounded by his men and taken to Multan where he was kept a prisoner in his tent. On the following night, he got out under the walls of the tent instead of the door, and, leaving behind him his tents and elephants and, in common clothes and barefooted, made his way to the camp of Edwardes, a distance of several miles. Nidhan Singh Sandhanwalia, the first cousin of Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia, and Kirpal Singh Malwai[32], also deserted Sher Singh Attariwala. The forces of freedom fighters now realised that the real contest between the British and the Sikhs would have to take place not in Multan but somewhere in the Majha, the homeland of the Khalsa. The Raja accordingly reached within two miles of the city of Lahore to liberate the Capital but the residents did not rise. Curfew was imposed in the city and armed troops patrolled the streets. The leading *sardars* were put under arrest. Lehna Singh Majithia was in the enemy camp. Ram Singh, son of the Wazir of the Ex-Raja Jaswant

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Singh of Nurpur (now in Himachal Pradesh) had, however, joined the Attariwala Raja, but his declaration for freedom was, more or less, symbolic.

Receiving information that Hugh Gough was bringing a large army with heavy guns across the Sutlej, Sher Singh Attariwala proceeded to join his father and hold the enemy on the Chenab – the Dark River. In November, 1848 Hugh Gough marched on to Lahore. The young Maharaja waited on the Commander-in-Chief to pay his respects, but he refused to receive the Maharaja. On November 16, at Mian Mir cantonment, near Lahore, Hugh Gough did not care to get off his elephant to return Maharaja's greetings, as if the latter was an enemy of the British. The martial instincts of the sturdy Jat peasantry were aroused; they 'beat their plough shares into swords, left the fields and hurried to the fray', and Sher Singh Attariwala overnight became the idol of the people. In the words of Edwin Arnold,[33] "The nation and the faith of the Khalsa were once more against us (the British) with all the unanimity of a sentiment more nearly akin to patriotism than any ever yet enlisted against the British Government." The Chiefs of the rebellion flung their names and wealth into the venture with a bold devotion that comes near to the heroic. In the North West, Attock, Peshawar and Bannu were all lost to the British. On October 12, 1848, the Governor General had sent a secret declaration of war against the government of Lahore, over which Frederick Currie, the British Resident, was presiding. The latter found himself in a very anomalous situation, as the Governor General was the guardian of the interests of the minor Maharaja and his dominions and it became a case of a guardian, secretly declaring war against his ward, with an ulterior motive to appropriate his property. At the suggestion of the Resident, that this declaration should not be made till the Commander-in-Chief was in a commanding attitude at Lahore,[34] the Governor General readily withdrew it.

The Raja captured some forts on the eastern bank of the Chenab. General Campbell marched towards the fort of Ram Nagar but the Sikh forces routed Campbell's forces, capturing one of his guns and the colours of a regiment. Three senior British officers, Lt. Col. Havelock, Brigadier General Cureton and Captain Fitzgerald were killed there. The British Subaltern wrote: "The enemy are in great feather, and ride along within half a mile of our camp and close to our pickets."[35]

Hugh Gough crossed the Chenab near Wazirabad under cover of darkness and an artillery duel was fought in the sugarcane fields around the village of Saddullapur on the afternoon of December 3, 1848. The cannonade from either side was fierce; the roar of the gunfire shook the very earth and shot ran through the air with a noise like a mighty winged spirit till the atmosphere was stunned. British superiority of guns gave them the edge over the Sikhs. The British then pursued the Raja across the Chaj Doab. The freedom fighters took up their position in the village, Rasul, surrounded

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by thick brushwood, intersected by deep ravines, the Jhelum flowing behind. The British forces, consisting of British and Hindustani men, took their position in village Dinghy, about three miles away from the Sikh forces. A feint attack on the British positions on December 13, 1848, was ineffective. The following day, Chattar Singh Attariwala sent troops he could spare to his son, promising to join him with the rest of the army. Hugh Gough now decided to attack. Dogra detachments under Col. Steinbach and Rohilla deserters joined the British forces.

The Attariwala took up formation at village Luliani. On January 13, 1849, in the noon, the enemy forces advanced from the side of Chillianawala, a few miles from the river Jhelum, above Gujarat. General Elahi Bakhsh's artillery kept the enemy at a distance. Brigadier Pennyuick suddenly charged in an attempt to force the Sikhs into the river, but they scattered into the brushwood jungles and began their harrying hit-and-run tactics, commonly known as *Dhai-Phut*. Hand-to-hand fight resulted in heavy loss of the enemy. The Brigadier, his son and hundreds of the enemy fell in the most savage fighting. The British Subaltern wrote: "The Sikhs fought like devils... fierce and untamed even in their dying struggle... Such a mass of men I never set eye on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets of the 24th (regiment) and struck at their assailants when they were transfixed." Four guns and colours of three regiments were captured by the Attariwala. General Robert Thackwell wrote about the bloody battle:

> "Confusion pervaded the whole army. Fears were generally entertained that the enemy (Sikh) would attempt a night attack. If they had been enterprising and could have perceived the extent of their advantage, they would assuredly have thrown themselves on us... the jungle which had befriended them in the commencement of the action and formed a protection to us."

The General painted the scene of the next morning thus:

> "Prince Albert's hats and military shoes might be seen in all directions strewn on the ground in great abundance... the camp next day was overspread with funeral gloom."

And it might well have been that 2,338 men of the British force lay dead or wounded in the ravines and the forests. Raja Sher Singh Attariwala's guns boomed a twenty one gun salute to the victory over the British.[36] Chillianwala was the worst defeat the enemy had suffered since their occupation of India.[37] "The country for miles presented a dreary spectacle of the dead and the dying - an open charnel house as it were."[38] The Sikhs caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and closing with their adversary dealt furious sword blows with their right. This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men. It may be doubted by many, that one Sikh foot soldier repulsed three lancers at Chillianwala, but such has been stated to be a fact.[39] But again the Sikhs

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failed to drive home their advantage to a conclusive victory. On account of their considerable losses, the Sikhs were unaware of the magnitude of the punishment that they had inflicted on the all-powerful enemy. General Elahi Bakhsh, in a moment of weakness, joined the enemy. As soon as the fighting stopped, it began to rain; it descended in such torrents as to render any further movement impossible for the time. The British pulled out of Chillianwala and retreated to the banks of the Chenab.

The Attariwala Raja had sent a proposal to the British for settlement – all he asked for was the reinstatement of Maharaja Dalip Singh and the evacuation of the British forces from Lahore. George Lawrence and Lt. Bowie, taken prisoners by the Attariwala, were also sent as envoys but the British rejected the terms, which ran counter to their plan to annex the Punjab to their territory in the very near future.

There was a feeling of consternation, both in India and England, which was considered to be a disaster worse than that in Afghanistan as nearly three thousand British lay dead or wounded in the ravines and brushwood, and the camp, was overspread with a funeral gloom. "When the news of Chillianwala reached England, the nation was stricken with profound emotion. A long series of military successes had ill-fitted it to hear with composure of British guns and British standards taken, of British cavalry flying before the enemy, and of a British army scarcely able by the most desperate exertions to snatch a victory from a wild Indian people. It was felt that our fame and influence in India had undergone a heavy blow, and a disaster was attributed very generally to the blunders of the Commander-in-Chief."

Next morning, when Sikh guns had boomed a twenty one gun salute to their victory, Dalhousie secretly wrote to the Duke of Wellington on January 22, 1849 "In Public I make, of course, the best of things; I treat it as a great victory. But writing confidentially to you, I do not hesitate to say that I consider my position grave." Rev. Caesar Caine[40] rightly wrote that "so doubtful was the result of these conflicts on the British troops that the indignation of England was roused and Sir Charles Napier was sent out to take command."

Siege of Multan – January 22, 1849

History goes that the siege of Multan was raised owing to the defection of Raja Sher Singh Attariwala and the besieging force retired once again to Suraj Kund where they remained encamped till the close of December 1848. On December 26, 1848, the Bombay Division, under Brigadier Dundas, arrived. Two regiments of British and five of native infantry, with three regiments of cavalry, were thus added to the besieging force, while the artillery brought up to 67 siege and 30 field guns. As the first step, the entire force was next day to drive the Diwan's army back at all points in the semicircle from the south-west to the north-east. The operations were thoroughly

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successful. By December 31, breaching-batteries were begun and also a large body of Sikhs made a determined sally against Edwards' Division. On December 30, a British cannonball had fallen on the magazine in the Fort blowing 40,000 Ibs of gunpowder and killing over five hundred of its defenders.

On January 2, 1849, the two columns jointly cleared the whole of the south side of the city, opening all its gates. The dour resistance encountered by the columns of Brigadiers Stalker and Markham was, however, beyond all expectation, for the Diwan's soldiers fought almost 'from street to street'. Even after the capture of the city and in spite of the attempt made by Edwardes to lure away the Diwan's soldiers by bribery, none did surrender. On January 3, the battered town of Multan presented the appearance of a vessel wrecked and broken by a tremendous storm which had driven it to an inhospitable shore. The streets were strewn with slain Sikhs, whose long locks, matted with gore or clotted blood, and long thick beards, blown about by the wind, gave the dead a demoniacal appearance. Almost all the houses or walls had been scorched and blackened by the bombardment of the British shells.[41] Diwan Mulraj closed the gates of the Fort, keeping about 4,000 picked men inside, and a constant storm of shell had reduced the interior of the citadel to a wreck. On January 20, the upper walls of the Fort were breached. The following day, a terrific and increasing cannonade on the Fort knocked the buildings inside to pieces, rendering it impossible for man or beast to move from one part of the Fort to the other. Horrifying now was the situation in and around the Fort. Mountains of dead lay in every part of the town, and heaps of human ashes in every square, where the bodies had been burnt as they were killed. The Diwan made overtures for peace and, "at 9 O'clock in the morning, on January 22, 1849, rode out of the fort and placed himself at the mercy of his victors. About four thousands of Mulraj's troops had then surrendered fifty four guns and four mortars, all of brass and in working order, were removed from the ruins. The Diwan, thereafter, met the inevitable fate of every unsuccessful 'rebel'. He was imprisoned and kept a prisoner in the tent of the Chief Engineer, and the Union Jack was soon seen fluttering from the highest bastion of the Multan Fort. The loss of the British in the second siege of Multan was 210 killed and 982 wounded."

The dead bodies of Vans Agnew and Lt. Anderson removed from their neglected grave, where they lay side by side, were interred with full military honours. The bodies of Kahan Singh Maan (the Governor-designate of Multan) and his son, who were imprisoned after the murders of the British officers, were also found locked in each other's arms under the ruins of their prison.[42] They were duly cremated after the British shed so many crocodile tears. The winning forces entered the Fort and looted the Treasury. The prize agents alone seized treasure worth nearly three million pounds sterling. No mention was ever made of the millions which the British army had stolen

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from his treasury. This was 'Prize Money', legitimate booty according to the uses of war.

Last Struggle for Independence – Gujrat

After suffering defeat at Chillianwala, Hugh Gough learned that the Sikhs have received large reinforcements and Chattar Singh Attariwala had joined his son, so he thought it unwise to engage the well entrenched forces of the Sikhs. He, therefore, waited for the fall of Multan and the reinforcements from the south. On January 25, 1849, news came to the camp of the British that Multan had fallen. Sher Singh Attariwala made a strong demonstration of attack on February 12, but Hugh Gough still refused to give battle. Gulab Singh Dogra, Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir, sent 10,000 troops to the scene of war to aid the British. Sher Singh took up his position at Gujrat between Jhelum and Chenab, where Akram Khan, a son of Dost Mohammad Khan of Kabul, joined him with about 3,000 Afghans. The Sikh side was weaker both in guns and in manpower. On February 20, 1849, the arrival of the Multan Army gave Hugh Gough the force which he desired in order to deliver the final blow to the Sikhs who had held the British power at bay 'with a stubborn skill hitherto unparalleled in Indian warfare.'

The morning of February 21st broke in splendour over the corn field which lay between the opposing armies. The British troops were in motion at 7.30 a.m. The Sikhs opened fire too soon and blew away ammunition of which they were already short. All went wasted. At 9.00 a.m., the British artillery was moved to the front and, from a distance of 800 yards from the Sikhs, for two hours and a half, the hail of shot and shell poured in on them. Although the British artillery suffered very considerably in the duel, the defence of the Sikhs had been pretty thoroughly knocked to pieces. At 11.30 a.m., from the village of Kalra Kalan, the Sikhs poured so fierce a fire on the British advance party that the place had to be stormed in the teeth of desperate resistance by Penny's Brigade. The Sikh troops attempted to stem the advance of the British forces towards Kalra Khurd but they were thrown back, after a severe battle. The Afghan horsemen fled away and by 12.30 p.m., the Sikh forces began to retreat and by one o'clock, the Sikh camp, their baggage and most of their guns were in possession of the victors. The British loss was 5 officers and 91 men killed and 24 officers and 646 men wounded.[43] In this action as well as at Chillianwala, wrote Sir J. Thackwell, "Sheikhs caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and, closing with their adversary dealt furious sword blows with their right...This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species of courage possessed by these men."[44] The same General further remarked: "The fidelity displayed by the Sikh gunners is worthy of record; the devotion with which they remained at their posts, when the atmosphere around them was absolutely fired by the British guns,

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does not admit description."[45] General Sir Charles Gough and Arthur Innes wrote: "Throughout the campaign, the Sikh leaders had displayed higher qualities than in the Sutlej campaign; their followers had assuredly shown no falling off."[46]

For twelve miles, the cavalry of the British pursued the fleeing force, till darkness fell. The night was made more dreadful by explosion of unfired Sikh ammunition dumps and by the thunder and rain which followed. The bodies of the chased were found scattered for many miles beyond the actual field of battle. The Afghans deserting the Sikhs retreated to the Khyber, having lost more than half of their number. Sher Singh Attariwala was also fleeing towards the north but the arch traitor Gulab Singh Dogra helped James Abbott to cut off his retreat towards the frontier. There was thus no hope left for a fresh fight with the aid and help of the Afghans.

Unconditional Surrender – March 12, 1849

After the disaster of Gujrat – the battle having placed the coping stone on the edifice of British Empire in India – the Sikh leaders fled to Rawalpindi where, in a high-level conference, they ultimately decided to surrender. The Attariwala *sardars*, with the wreck of their army, some 16,000 men, and all their guns, repaired to the British camp, at Manakyala, at Hurmel near Rawalpindi, on March 12, 1849 and surrendered unconditionally to General Walter Gilbert. The spectacle on that memorable day was really awe-inspiring and touching. Both the Attariwala *sardars*, father and son as they were, moved forward, with their faces covered under their shawls, and gave up their swords to the British General. In all, thirty five chiefs laid down their arms. Lines of two native infantry regiments were formed and through those lines the soldiers were required to pass and those brave warriors advanced in gloomy silence, one by one, casting their arms on the heaps that received them. Some delivered up their arms with tears in their eyes, others with sighs and downcast looks. Fifty one guns were placed before their victors at this ceremony. "The reluctance of some of the old Khalsa veterans," wrote General Sir Robert Thackwell, "to surrender their arms was evident. Some could not restrain their tears, while on the faces of others; rage and hatred were visibly depicted."

The vanquished soldiers were permitted to retain their horses and each one was granted a *rupee* to enable him to return to his home. "The remark of one veteran greybeard," wrote Khushwant Singh, "as he put down the gun, summed up the history of the Punjab:

'*Aj Ranjit Singh Mar Gaya*[47] (Today Ranjit Singh has died)'.

Thus the submission of the Sikhs to the British power was complete. Both the Attariwala *Sardars* were confined within the bounds of their village, Attari, with the following restrictions:

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1. They were not to be beyond 1½ kos of Attari without written permission;
2. They were not to retain any arms; and
3. They were not to correspond with any one concerned in the late war.

Intrigues continued through the agency of Brahmins and priests. Dalhousie was of the view that the Attariwala *Sardars* were in constant correspondence with those who were implicated in the last war and were causing messages to come and go. It was, therefore, decided to arrest and banish Sardar Chattar Singh and others from the Punjab. The order was to be executed on November 1, 1849, without allowing any opportunity for mischief. At 1.00 a.m., John Lawrence, R. Montgomery, Major Edwardes and Hudson, with a corps of irregular cavalry and Pathan Horse, set out from Lahore and, at daybreak, reached Attari and at once surrounded it, and swooped upon the slumbering leaders. Sardar Chattar Singh with his three sons, namely, Raja Sher Singh, Avtar Singh and Tej Singh, (the fourth Gulab Singh having not joined the freedom struggle was not touched), and their cousins, Sardars Nahar Singh and Bishan Singh, were arrested and conveyed to Lahore Fort by 11.00 a.m. Hudson stayed back at Attari to confiscate the property of the arrested chiefs and he personally supervised the operations to dismantle their fort. In January 1850, they were sent as prisoners to Allahabad Fort where they were kept under strict surveillance. According to Secret Consultation and Proceedings, No. 76 dated February 1851, they were not even allowed to sleep in the open during the summer months. In spite of such fetters, they were in constant touch with Rani Jindan who was confined at Benaras (present Varanasi). Sardar Chattar Singh and his three sons were then removed to the Fort William at Calcutta, where, in October 1855, he was laid low with severe dysentery and, within two months, on December 27, 1855, he breathed his last. Earlier in January 1854, Sardar Chattar Singh and his two sons, Raja Sher Singh and Avtar Singh, were released from confinement, Teja Singh and Avtar Singh were granted a *Zamindari* in Oudh, worth Rs. 28,000/- per annum, besides earning a life pension of Rs. 7,200/- each, after the death of Raja Sher Singh. Raja Sher Singh died at Benaras in 1858, before his time. When he felt his end was approaching and learning from the Brahmins that, to escape transmigration, he must lie for seven days, fasting, by the Ganges, listening to the Bhagwat Gita, under his command, morning after morning, the dying Raja was carried to the river-side; and throughout the day listened to the words of the sacred Purana. On the seventh day, he gave Rs. 2,000/- to the Brahmins and, in the evening, an exile, far from his country, left for his heavenly abode. His brother, Sardar Avtar Singh settled at Rai Bareily, in Uttar Pradesh, died in 1897, leaving his only son Sardar Prem Singh. The family of the Attariwala Sardar paid heavily for raising the banner of freedom struggle against the British, who themselves had to quit the whole of India, within a century of the annexation of the Punjab; but the wrong done could not be undone.

– Avtar Singh Gill

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References

1. Village Bharowal, in tehsil Tarn Taran, near river Beas.
2. Henry Hardinge wrote to Currie on December 14, 1846: 'The guarantee to the Chief of their Jagheers by British occupation must, I should think, be powerful, stimulus to ensure their adhesion to the conditions imposed.' (Private correspondence 15/16).
3. Hardinge to Currie dt. Dec. 7, 1846.
4. When the Rani learnt that Sher Singh Attariwala had also agreed that she be pensioned off, she almost accoladed him with the remarks that "She did not expect him who had decided to give his own daughter (Sic) to Maharaja Dalip Singh to act in that way. " *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh, Daftar* V, p. 30.
5. *The History of The British Empire in India* (London 1866) p. 85.
6. T*he Punjab in Peace and War*, London (1904).
7. K.C.B. (Knight Commander of British Empire).
8. The Maharaja 'with a spirit which is worthy of all praise.' wrote John Sullivan 'flatly refused to be the medium of conferring the title of Rajah upon the Sirdar Tej Singh, who all Lahore abhorred as a traitor.'
9. Hardinge to Currie dt. August 19. 1847, Simla.
10. Ganda Singh, Private Correspondence Relating to the Anglo-Singh Wars (1955) pp.489-90
11. Rani Jindan was 'pulled out by her hair' and Duleep was led away to the groves of the Shalimar Garden, Christy Campbell in, the Maharaja's Box, 2000 AD, p. 33.
12. Letter from Hardinge to F. Currie dt. August 23, 1847.
13. Rani Jindan wrote to John Lawrence on September 10, 1847 challenging the Resident on the subject. (Serial letter No. 35 in Book no. 186, Punjab Govt. Records.)
14. An ancient town in the Khangah Dogran district headquarters situated in 31° 43 N and 74° I E on Lahore-Hafizabad road. At present the district Headquarter in Pakistan.
15. Letter No. 33 in Book No. 186 Punjab Govt. Record-August 1847.
16. Letter from Dalhousie to John Hobhouse Calcutta, dt. March 8, 1848. (From Broughton Collection of papers).
17. Governor General to the Secret Committee March 22, 1848- Incl, 5, Jeebun Singh to the Secretary to the Govt. of India. February 23, 1848 (Parliamentary Papers relating to the Punjab 1847-49).
18. *Koh-i-noor,* pp. 59-60.
19. From Broughton Collection of papers-Microfilm in the Punjab State Archives Patiala.
20. Son of Jamadar Khushal Singh.
21. *Punjab Blue Book*, p. 123.
22. Sir Henry Durand, *The Second Sikh War* (1851).
23. Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, Queen Victoria's Maharaja Duleep Singh (1979), p. 9.
24. A Year on the Punjab Frontier, p. 58.
25. Several proclamations issued by Mulraj, Sher Singh Attariwala and others are preserved in vernacular section of the Record office, Lahore (Pakistan).
26. He was put on trial on March 2, 1849 before special military Commission and sentence to death. See Appendix-B.
27. *Punjab Blue Book* 1847-49, p. 150, Reproduced by Major Edwardes in A year on the Punjab Frontier, Vol II, pp. 106-9. See also Appendix C.
28. Dr. Ganda Singh, *The British occupation of the Punjab,* 1955, p. 115.
29. Ibid., p. 127.
30. H. B. Edwardes, *A Year on The Punjab Frontier,* Vol II. (1851) Reprint 1971, p. 517

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31. Great grandfather of late Major Harinder Singh Ex-Minister, of Raja Sansi, Dist. Amritsar.
32. Grandson of Dhanna Singh Malwai and grandfather of S.B.Fateh Singh, once Home Secretary of Faridkot State.
33. Dalhousie's Administration of British India.
34. Dr. Ganda Singh, p. 130.
35. Khushwant Singh, *The Fall of the Kingdom of the Punjab* 1971, p. 142.
36. Syed Muhammad Latif, p. 569.
37. E. J. Thackwell, p. 115.
38. Ibid, p. 119.
39. Ibid.
40. *Sikh wars and Sepoy mutiny* (1891) Reprint (1989), p. 22.
41. Syed. Muhammad Latif, *History of the Punjab* (1889) Reprint 1964, p. 566.
42. Syed Muhammad Latif, History of Punjab (1889) Reprint 1964, p. 567.
43. Charles Gough & Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, Reprint 1970, p.245 and captain A.C. Elliot Deputy Commissioner Gujrat in The Chronicle of Gujrat (1902), p. 48.
    G. A. Henry, Through the Sikh War, p. 345 however states that 76 men were killed and only 595 were wounded while admitting death of 5 officers and injured 24 officers.
44. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p. 178.
45. Ibid.
46. *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p. 249.
47. *Fall of the Kingdom of Punjab*, p. 179, Sita Ram Kohli's Manuscripts.

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28

ANNEXATION OF PUNJAB KINGDOM

British Plans of Annexation

Private correspondence amongst the Governor General, the Commander-in-Chief and Political Assistants of the British Residents, supplemented by Treaties and proclamations, the letters of Rani Jindan and contemporary writings related the story of how the independent kingdom of the Punjab was annexed, without any legal or moral justification, and converted into a British province, tarnishing the fair name of England with this grossly un-English act. The main aim of the British, even during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was to encircle the territory of the Maharaja, either by their own territory or by the territories of those who were subservient to their will so that they might conveniently walk into the Punjab whenever they chose to do so. In April-May 1841, when the British had been in Afghanistan, for about one and a half year, Mrs. Henry Lawrence had written to Mrs. Cameron, from Sabathu (in the Simla Hills), on May 26, 1841:

> "Wars, and rumours of wars, are on every side and there seems no doubt that next cold weather will decide the long suspended question of occupying the Punjab; Henry, both in his Civil and Military capacity, will probably be called to take part in whatever goes on."

From Governor Place, Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington, on October 26, 1841:

> "...The Punjab has been in a very disturbed state since the death of Runjeet Singh... The immediate danger of collision arises from the necessity, annually recurring, of our exacting a passage through the country for our regiments going to relieve others at Cabul, and for the convoys... What I desired, therefore, was your opinion, founded, as far as it could be upon the imperfect geographical information which can be given to you, as to the best mode of attacking the Punjab...'

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In another letter dated May 11, 1843, from Agra, Ellenborough wrote: "The breakup in the Punjab will probably begin with murder" (of Raja Dhian Singh Dogra) at the hands of Maharaja Sher Singh. Three months later, on August 12, 1843, he informed the Duke from Calcutta: "The affairs of the Punjab will probably receive their denouement from the death of Sher Singh's General Ventura of the Sikh Army was acting as the informer and Ellenborough wrote to Queen Victoria, on October 20, 1843, while sending a copy of the General's letter, what the General thought of Hira Singh Dogra (Prime Minister), and what he thought of the present and future state of the Punjab. Referring to their designs, he also wrote:

> '...but it is impossible not to perceive that the ultimate tendency of the late events at Lahore is, without any efforts on our part, to bring the plains first, and at a somewhat later period the hills, under our direct protection or control."

So, throughout this period, Ellenborough was steadily preparing for operations against the Punjab, although there was not the slightest indication of any hostility towards the British in the country. He acknowledged this fact in a chain of letters, amongst which he wrote to the Duke of Wellington on September 20, 1843:

> "There does not seem to be any feeling against us. They are only quarrelling amongst themselves apparently; nor do I see the least show of hostility to us anywhere.'

His dispatch to the British Queen on July 14, 1841, indicated that pacific appearance continued throughout the remaining period of the Governor General's administration. Without any provocation or show of hostility from anywhere in the Punjab, the Governor General was looking forward to marching his armies into the Sikh Kingdom. He actually fixed November 15, 1845 to commence operation against the country of their old ally. However, because of his ultra aggressive policy and arrogant disregard of the wishes of his masters, he was recalled by the Directors of the East India Company, and Henry Hardinge, was appointed in his place. The new Governor General was a kinsman by marriage of the outgoing Governor General and the latter wrote to George Broadfoot on June 17, 1844:

> "You will have heard that the court of Directors have thought fit to recall me. My successor will carry out all my views. He is my most confidential friend, with whom I have communicated upon all public subjects for thirty years."

Immediately on his taking over, in July 1844, Henry Hardinge proceeded to carry out almost literally the views of his predecessor and the instruction of his masters. The Sikhs were provoked every now and then, but still they maintained a complete restraint and order at Lahore. Henry Hardinge wrote to his predecessor on January 23, 1845:

> "Even if we had a case for devouring our ally in adversity, we are not ready and could not be ready, until the hot winds set in, and the Sutlej became a torrent. Moderation will do us no harm, if in the interval the hills and the plains weaken each other; but on what

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plea could we attack the Punjab, if this were the month of October and we had our army in readiness?

"Selfpreservation may require the dispersion of this Sikh army, the baneful influence of such an example is the evil most to be dreaded, but exclusive of this case, how are we to justify the seizure of our friend's territory who in our adversity assisted us to retrieve our affairs?"

Nine months later, on October 23, 1845, Henry Hardinge conceded to his predecessor that the Sikhs continued to behave like friends and wrote:

"The Punjab must however be Sikh or British... The delay is merely a postponement of the settlement of the question, at the same time, we must bear in mind that as yet no cause of war has been given."

Suddenly, in December 1845, the British provoked the Sikhs to attack them, and the coveted possessions of Maharaja Dalip Singh on the left bank of Sutlej were confiscated and annexed to the British Empire in no time, and after the First Anglo-Sikh war, in terms of the Treaty of Lahore, March 9, 1846, and Treaty of Lahore, March 11, 1846, Sikhs were deprived of the fertile Jullundur Doab and the Kashmir region, besides patronizing the three arch-traitors-Gulab Singh Dogra, Misr Tej Singh and Raja Lal Singh. But the wholesale annexation of the Punjab was not yet found easy. John Lawrence was in favour of reducing the Sikh Sardars to mere peasants and tillers of land. So, he wrote to Frederick Currie on October 17, 1846:

"Why not let them gradually fall in, and let the descendants of these conquerors return to the plough whence their fathers came."

Treaty of Bharowal, December 16, 1846, forced upon the Sikhs in connivance with the traitors, gave to the British Resident at Lahore "full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the state." The Council of Regency was but a set of puppets removable at pleasure. The British became the sole guardian of the person and property of the infant Maharaja Dalip Singh. Subsequently, the traitors were elevated to high power and Rani Jindan, the Queen-mother, was separated from her son and then sent in exile beyond the Punjab. This event gave to the people an indication of impending occupation of the Punjab by the British. Chattar Singh Attariwala, the Governor of Hazara, desired that he be allowed to marry his daughter, Bibi Tej Kaur, to the young Maharaja, to whom she was already betrothed, but the British could not allow the Sardar to gather greater strength by the proposed matrimonial alliance of the House of Attari with the Royal family. The Sardar felt slighted and, with his brave son, Sher Singh Attariwala, gave a tough fight to the British in the battlefield but lost. They were also sent in exile from the Punjab, and Bibi Tej Kaur was married to Sardar Janmeja Singh Gill, son of Sardar Ishwar Singh Mariwala, at whose place she later died in 1863, leaving behind two sons to mourn her. The second Anglo-Sikh War had come to an end in March 1849, when the choked

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throats of the warriors, with tears rolling down from the eyes, exclaimed: *'Aj Ranjit Singh Mar Gaya'*.

Punjab Annexed to British Empire

The British Resident, Henry Lawrence, was strongly opposed to the annexation of the Punjab. Dalhousie, therefore, selected his Foreign Secretary, Henry M. Elliot as his agent for the final transaction of annexation or, more precisely, confiscation. On March 27, 1849, he sent Elliot to Lahore to announce the decision of the GovernorGeneral to the Maharaja and his people. The following day, he reached there and proceeded to manage this delicate affair. Elliot himself writes, in the report[1], dated March 29, 1849, the manner in which he accomplished his mission:

> "Immediately on my arrival, I communicated to Sir. H. M. Lawrence and Mr. J. Lawrence the instruction with which I was charged, and regretted to find that both those officers were fully persuaded that the Council of Regency would on no account be induced to accede to the terms which were offered for their acceptance, in as much as they had already incurred great odium amongst their countrymen for what were considered to be their former concessions."

The agent was not disheartened and cleverly did he employ the more artful device of working separately on the personal interests of each member of the Council. He states:

> "I, however, requested that the two most influential members of the Council might be at once summoned to a private conference at the Residency, and Rajah Tej Singh and Dewan Deena Nath were accordingly sent for. The Rajah, at first, excused himself on the ground of sickness; and I should have, consequently, gone to his house, had I not been apprehension that any exhibition of undue eagerness might have been interpreted into too great a desire to obtain his concurrence. It was then intimated to him that, as my mission was urgent, and could not be accomplished without him, he should come to the Residency, unless he really was seriously ill. Upon this, he came, his looks giving no warrant for his excuse, and was accompanied by Dewan Deena Nath.
>
> "After the first compliments had been exchanged, I explained to them the purpose for which I had come, that the Punjab would be annexed to the British dominions at all events, but that it was for them to decide whether this should be done in an unqualified manner, or whether they would subscribe to the conditions I was about to lay before them.
>
> "The Rajah, who was more than usually nervous and garrulous, opened out in a strain of invective against Rajah Shere Singh and all the rebellious Sirdars, who had brought the Council to this pass, acknowledge that the British Government had acquired a perfect right to dispose of the country as it saw fit, and recommended that it should declare its will, without calling upon the Council to sign any conditions. I replied that, if they refused to accept the terms which the Governor General offered, the Maharajah and themselves

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would not be entitled to receive any allowance whatever.

"The Dewan, who was much more deliberate and reserved than his colleague, commented on the severity of the conditions, and particularly on the expatriation of the Maharaja; and when I told him it was intended to exclude also the female relatives of the Maharaja from the palace, in order that the citadel might be exclusive in British occupation, he remarked that, immediately they were relieved from the restraints which their present residence subjected them to, they would begin leading licentious lives, and bring scandal upon the memory of Runjeet Singh and his descendants.

"After many inquiries from them about the distance to which the Maharaja was to be removed, I observed that his destination would not improbably be the Deccan, but, after they had requested reconsideration, on account of the remoteness of that country, 'where', said they, 'God knows whether the people are Hindoos or Mahomedans,' I promised that the Maharaja should not be sent anywhere to the east of the Ganges, pointing out Hardwar, Gurhmuktesir, Bithoor, and Allahabad as being all of them places of high sanctity in their religion. They seemed to be thankful for this as a concession. But they had no definite notions of the exact position of any of these places except Hurdwar. The Rajah, indeed, was astonished to discover that Lahore was not so far from Allahabad as from Benaras.

"They seemed fully satisfied with the personal allowance assigned to the Maharaja, which I told them would be about 10,000 *rupees* per mensum.

"Other subjects were then discussed, and they enquired anxiously about their own future position. I told them that it was not intended to deprive them of their jagheers or salaries, and that, for this indulgence they would be expected to yield the British Government the benefit of their advice and assistance whenever they were called upon to do so; that, if they did not subscribe to the conditions, I could not promise that any consideration would be shown to them. The Dewan enquired whether the jagheers would be continued to future generations I replied, certainly not, unless the grants conveyed a perpetual title, and that would be left to the decision of the officers, who would shortly be appointed to investigate the validity of all rent-free tenures.

"After much more parley, during which, while I told them that they were at perfect liberty to decline, or to accede to, the conditions I had been instructed to lay before them – at the same time I convinced them of my resolute determination to yield no point, they expressed their willingness to sign the paper, and signed it accordingly, not without evident sorrow and repugnance on the part of the Dewan."

Having succeeded with Misr Tej Singh and Diwan Dina Nath, Henry Elliot summoned Bhai Nidhan Singh, the doyen of the priestly family of Bhai Basti Ram, and Faqir Nur-ud-din, that of the most influential Mohammedan family of Lahore, the only other members of the Council of Regency then residing at Lahore. When they appeared, they were duly informed of what had passed in their absence and, said Henry Elliot, "they said they would abide by whatever their colleagues were prepared to do. They then affixed their seals and signatures to the paper in duplicate, and Sir

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H.M. Lawrence and myself then added our countersignatures. It was agreed that next morning a Durbar should be held at seven o'clock, a.m. in order to promulgate the Articles subscribed to, and to obtain the Maharaja's ratification."

The conference had lasted about two hours and then the members present took leave from their new master. Shamsher Singh Sandhanwalia and Attar Singh Kalianwala were not present at Lahore and they were not taken into confidence, only the signatures of their agents were obtained on the document on their behalf. Sher Singh Attariwala, who raised the banner of freedom, and Ranjodh Singh Majithia, suspected of his leanings towards the freedom fighters and having been under restraint at the moment, were deliberately left out. The destiny of the ruling Maharaja, his twenty million subjects, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims and the questions of the dissolution of the Sikh Kingdom and of the confiscation of its property, including the world-famous gem, koh-i-noor, were thus finally decided and agreed upon by four of the selfish Councilors, within a short space of two hours. "Even the deal over the sale of a flock of sheep, between a shepherd and a butcher, perhaps," wrote Khushwant Singh, "takes longer time than was taken by Mr. Elliot and Raja Tej Singh and Co., in making over to the British, the fortunes of the two *crores* of people of the Punjab." John Login, commenting on the above report of Mr. Elliot, in 1860 remarked:

> "It indicates feelings more creditable to the members of the Lahore Durbar (whose personal interests were separately worked upon) than to the British official, who describes the scene with so much undignified exultation."

The signature on the fatal document that was prepared by Elliot beforehand thus put an end of the independence of the Punjab, and it seemed too late and useless to shed tears over the conduct of the British agent, who faithfully performed his duty to the Crown.

On March 29, 1849, at 7.00 a.m., Elliot held a Darbar at Lahore for the purpose of making known the decision of the Government of India. Elliot, accompanied by John Lawrence, Henry Lawrence and other officials of the Residency, arrived at the Darbar Hall, in the Lahore Fort which was suitably decorated – English and Indian spectators lining the walls on either side. After the usual salutations, and giving and taking of presents, the Maharaja and his Ministers joined the cavalcade, small but assertive as it was, and the Maharaja was conducted to a seat at the end of the Hall of Audience (being the last time he occupied the seat) and the British envoys took their places on either side to him. The members of the Council of Regency, who were considered by the British envoys as 'desirables' were also present there. The proceedings were watched by a vast concourse of spectators, who ranged themselves on either side of the centre seats. Amidst a deep silence, the proclamation of the Annexation of the Punjab, the Fatal Edict as it was, was read aloud in English declaring

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that henceforth the sovereignty of the Punjab was assumed by the British. In the equally deep silence which followed for a few minutes, Diwan Dina Nath, heaving a sigh, remarked that the decree of the Governor General, howsoever hard upon the young innocent Maharaja, should be obeyed, but he trusted that the Maharaja and the servants of the State would receive consideration at the hands of the British Government, and that some allowance would be granted to maintain them in comfort and respectability. John Login quoted his entreaties to the New Master thus:

> "If France after the defeat and captivity of Bonaparte has been restored to its legitimate ruler, though the country yielded thirty *crores* of revenue, it would be no very extra ordinary act of British clemency if the Punjab, which yielded less than three crores, should be restored to the Maharaja. However, let the Governor General's will be done."

Elliot simply replied, that the time of concession and clemency was gone; that was ready, on the part of the Governor General, to confirm the conditions to which the Council had subscribed yesterday, and which should be read out in Persian and Hindostani, for general information. Accordingly, the Persian and Hindustani translations of the Manifesto was read out for the comprehension of everyone present. This was listened to with the deepest attention, but it called forth no observation. To the former signatures were then added those of Gundur Singh, the accredited Agent of Sardar Sher (Shamsher) Singh Sandhanwalia, and of Sardar Lal Singh, Agent and son of Sardar Attar Singh Kalianwala, thus completing the entire number of the members of the Council of Regency, "who had remained nominally faithful to their engagements." The fatal edict was then handed, in duplicate, by Misr Tej Singh, the arch-traitor, to the young frightened Maharaja, containing the conditions on which he and his chiefs might assure themselves of 'generous' treatment at the hands of their conquerors, who, affixed his signature, by tracing the initials of his name in English letters. The alacrity with which he took the papers when offered to him, clearly suggested the idea that he felt that he was already an outraged prince, and, in the words of Henry Login, "possibly, he had been instructed by his advisors that any show of hesitation might lead to the substitution of terms less favourable than those which had been offered." The document thus fully ratified, the Proclamation was read aloud, under the orders of the Foreign Secretary, in the native language and a copy of the terms was handed over to the deposed Maharaja. This farcical transaction formally and finally transformed the sovereign state of the Punjab, into a British province, and its ruler, Dalip Singh, into a throneless pensioner of the British Government.

The whole ceremony was conducted with grave decorum. No Sardar was armed. The costly jewels and gaudy robes, so conspicuous in the Sikh Court on other public occasions, were now thrown aside. As soon as the Maharaja signed the document,

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Elliot, airing a feeling of pride and exultation over his achievement, threw to the wind the sense of usual etiquette, dissolved the Darbar, rose from his coveted seat and left the Hall. He later wrote: "As I left the palace, I had the proud satisfaction of seeing the British colours hoisted on the citadel under a royal salute from our own artillery, at once proclaiming the ascendancy of British rule, and sounding the knell of the Khalsa Raj."

Post-Mortem of the Proclamation

The Proclamation of Annexation of the Punjab to the British Empire was, however, a most artful piece of preciosity full of misleading and wrongful statements. Arnold referred to those statements, and wrote:

> "The British have faithfully kept their word and have scrupulously observed every obligation which the treaties imposed upon them.
>
> "But the Sikh people and their Chiefs have, on their part, grossly and faithlessly violated the promises by which they were bound.
>
> "Of their annual tribute no portion whatever has at any time been paid and large loans advanced to them by the Government of India have never been repaid.
>
> "Finally, the army of the State, and the whole Sikh people, joined by many of the Sardars in the Punjab, who signed the treaties, and led by a member of the Regency itself, have risen in arms against us and have waged a fierce and bloody war, for the proclaimed purpose of destroying the British and their power."[2]

Only two terms in the Treaties of March 9 and 11, 1846 to some extent, went in favour of the Sikh Kingdom. By Articles 15 of the first Treaty, the British had solemnly promised that they, 'will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State, and by Articles I, of the second Treaty, they undertook that the British 'force shall not be detained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year.' They, however, chose to bypass these mandatory provisions of the Treaties, and retained their force beyond the expiration of the time limit. Moreover, they forced the Treaty of Bharowal (December 16, 1846) upon the Punjab, and greatly added to their force. Thus the British became the virtual rulers of Punjab and the Council of Regency was manned by the Chiefs and Sardars who simply executed the orders of the British Resident. All State orders were issued with or without the seal of the Maharaja. When Raja Lal Singh was ordered to be sent in exile, the Maharaja's seal, according to John Kaye in his *A History of the Sepoy War in India 1857-1858,* Vol. I, was taken possession of by the Resident, who used the same freely as he wished. The traitors of the Lahore State were honoured with titles and grants. The queen mother was unceremoniously disgraced and sent in exile. Sikh Forts were occupied by the British forces and new Governors were appointed in the provinces. So, the Resident was in fact the ruler of Lahore State. At the same time, there is ample evidence to

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prove that the Council remained scrupulously faithful to the terms of the Treaties referred to above. A few instances are given below:

a) As desired by the Resident, the Lahore Darbar issued *Parwanas* to their military and civil officers to send reinforcements to Herbert Edwardes at Multan and to pay salaries of the men under his command (*Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Lahore*, dated August 28, 1848).

b) Throughout the period, the Darbar kept the Resident fully informed of the happenings at Multan, Hazara and other places. The Lahore Chief, Raja Tej Singh regularly sought his advice and acted upon it. The other members of the Council also occasionally saw him and assured him of their faithful adherence to their engagements with the British, kept him in touch with the political situations in the country and suggested to him measures for the suppression of the rising... Diwan Mulraj and, later on, Sardar Chattar Singh and his sons, Sardar Avtar Singh and Raja Sher Singh, and their friends like Sardar Lal Singh Muraria, Surat Singh Majithia, etc. 'who had taken up arms against the British in the Punjab, were looked down upon and declared as *mufsids* (mischief makers); their houses were searched by the officials of the Darbar and their property confiscated to the State. (*Akh. Lah* dated September 1 to 8, 1848)

c) At the suggestion of the Darbar, the Resident appointed two of his Assistant Political Officers to take charge of the *ilaqas* and *jagirs* of the recalcitrant *sardars* of Gujranwala, Ranghar-Nangal and Murara, and administer them according to the wishes of their chief. (*Akh. Lah.* dated October 4 to 9 and 13 to 15, 1848). One of the officers, on arrival at Ranghar-Nangal (Near Batala) set fire to the houses of the Sardars. (*Akh. Lah.* dated October 13 to 15, 1848).

d) Food and fodder were regularly supplied by the servants of the Darbar to the British regiments moving from their cantonments into the Punjab for the suppression of the disturbances in the country. (*Akh. Lah.* dated October 21 to 24, 1848).

e) As desired by the Resident, the Lahore Darbar fired 21 guns to celebrate the victory of Multan, and issued orders to Faqir Shamsudin, the commander of the Gobindgarh fort at Amritsar, to do the same. Khalifa Nuruddin was sent to convey to the Resident, congratulations on behalf of the Darbar. (*Akh. Lah.* Dated January 25, 1849).

The British Proclamation of March 29, 1849, accusing the Sikhs of non-cooperation and violating the Treaty – promises, was a travesty of facts. The British themselves, who were bound to preserve the peace of the country and protect the Maharaja, had faithlessly violated the promises. Major Evans Bell confronted Lord Dalhousie with his statements recorded in the Blue Book, where he had remarked

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that the Regency, during these troubles, gave substantial or effective assistance to the British Government. On August 16, 1848, the Resident himself had stated to Lord Dalhousie: "The conduct of the Durbar, collectively and individually, has been entirely satisfactory in everything connected with this outbreak and, indeed, in all other respects for the last two months."

Lord Dalhousie, overlooking the fact that the control of the finances was in the hands of the British Resident, placed first and foremost among the 'gross violations' of Treaties of which 'the Sikhs' had been guilty, the non-payment of British military subsidy. It was alleged that from the day when the Treaty was signed, "not one rupee has ever been paid. Loans advanced by the British Government to enable them to discharge the arrears of their disbanded troops have never been repaid." The Blue Book, however, contradicted this assertion. On February 23, 1848, the Resident sent the report to the Governor General as follows:

> "The Durbar have paid into this treasury gold to the value of *Rupees* 1,35,837/-. By this payment they have reduced their debt to the British Government from upwards of forty *lakhs* of *rupees* to less than twenty-seven."

In the same dispatch, he wrote:

> "They have thus, by economy and care, been able to make good four month's pay of the Irregular Cavalry, to discharge the whole of the arrears of the men who have been pensioned and disbanded, to meet their current expenses, and have still, at this moment (about 6 weeks before the outbreak of Multan), full eight *lakhs* of *rupees* in the different treasuries to meet the public exigencies."

If, subsequently, financial equilibrium had not been restored, and if the regular payment of the tribute had not commenced, when the outbreak of 1848 once more threw everything into confusion, it was no fault of the Council of Regency. "Not only had the British authorities accepted the trust with their eyes open to the disordered state of the finances", remarked Major Evans Bell, "but the Resident, opposed by the Council of Regency and supported by the Governor-General, had introduced extensive changes into the fiscal system, leading as had been anticipated, to a very serious loss of revenue, which he fully admits in his reports to the Governor General on August 28, and January 12th, 1848." All these measures received the approval and confirmation of the Governor General. They were not favourably viewed by the Council of Regency but no opposition was attempted or permitted. The Resident had made the remarks, in a dispatch dated April 6, 1848, that the 'Durbar was averse to its introduction, but yielded as they always do...' Yet, Lord Dalhousie placed the regular payment of the Subsidy among the main provisions of the agreement which the Sikh had 'either entirely evaded, or grossly violated'. There was neither evasion nor violation. "The use of such terms", wrote Major Evans Bell, "is positively shameful.." The Resident

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himself lessened the receipts of the State and diverted the expenditure into other channels. These measures were, according to John Sullivan in Koh-i-Noor, "entirely the Resident's work, approved by the Governor General, reluctantly accepted by the Durbar."

Lord Dalhousie then attempted to create a thorough confusion, by contriving to fasten a plausible stigma of perfidy and violation of Treaties upon the State of Lahore, only by ringing the changes through several paragraphs, upon the terms, 'the Sikh nation', 'the Sikhs', 'the Sikh People', and 'the Government', or 'State of Lahore'. The Council of Regency never was 'the Government of Lahore' and the Resident's authority as Chief ruler of Punjab was never suspended. There was no rising either of the army or the people in the central Sikh districts of the State; not a single British officer was attacked or molested. The Resident continued to stay at the capital, issuing orders to the Council of Regency and receiving their fullest co-operation. Only one member of the Council, Sher Singh Attariwala, out of eight, had, at a late stage, joined the 'rebels' and another, Sardar Attar Singh Kalianwala, was only suspected. Only a small fraction of the army deserted to Diwan Mulraj and to the Attariwala Sardars in the far-flung north-western and south-western muslim populated districts of the State. Even there, the troops commanded by General Cortland, Sardar Fateh Singh, Misr Sahib Dayal, Sheikh Imamuddin, Colonels Bhup Singh, Budh Singh and others remained faithful and obedient to the British military officers, in accordance with the orders of the Lahore Darbar. At least 20,000 subjects of the Lahore State, enrolled in its service, "fought on the side of the Government, and assisted in suppressing the rebellion", not knowing that at the end of it their country would be annexed and permanently occupied by the British Government. They were taken in when Lord Dalhousie publicly declared on November 18, 1848 and confirmed in a second proclamation dated February 5, 1849, that the large army under the Commander-in-Chief was not entering the Punjab "as an enemy to the constituted Government", he had already written secretly to the Resident on October 3, 1848, that "the Governor General considers the State of Lahore to be, to all intents and purposes, directly at war with the British Government". The State of Lahore at war with the British Government, wrote Major Evans Bell, "while the Sovereign of the Punjaub was at Lahore, the Ward and Pupil of the Resident: The State of Lahore at war with the British Government, while the administration of the Punjab was carried on at Lahore by the British Resident, in the name of the infant Sovereign, by virtue of a Treaty with him, and in unaltered accordance with the arrangements of that Treaty: Where was that State of Lahore with which the British Government was at war, to be found? In the camp of Rajah Shere Singh, or in the fortress of Mooltan, which had been summoned to surrender on the 5th of September, 'after the firing of a royal salute in

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honour of Her Majesty the Queen, and her Ally, His Highness Maharaja Duleep Singh? Was it personified by the Dewan Moolraj, or Chuttur Singh, or Sher Singh, who were all proclaimed as rebels against the Government of Maharaja Duleep Singh? In fact, Lord Dalhousie had no right to speak of the acts of the rebels, either as 'the acts of the nation', or of 'the State of Lahore'."

Having conducted the administration of the Lahore State for two years and three months, by means of his own agent and his own nominees, in the name of his ward and ally, Maharaja Dalip Singh, under a Treaty which he upheld and enforced to the last, Lord Dalhousie turned round, when the 'rebellion' was over, declared the Treaty to have been violated and, therefore, null and void, and explained that the successful campaign, ostensibly carried on for the suppression of a rebellion against the Government of Maharaja Dalip Singh, "really constituted a war against the Maharajah and the State of Lahore, by which the British Government has 'conquered' the Punjab." But during the period prescribed by the Treaty for the Maharaja's minority, "no crisis, no second struggle, could absolve the British Government", retorted Major Evans Bell, "from the obligations of guardianship and management, so long as it professed to fulfil those duties, and was able to do so without interruption." The Governor General, true to his words and deeds, violated Treaties, abused a sacred trust... and made an acquisition as unjust as it was imprudent. "This is perhaps the first instance on record.", says John Sullivan, "in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds upon his ward." He continued: "The confiscation of the Punjab is a thing done and if I could make it transparent as the sun, that the act was a wanton violation of the most solemn duties which we had imposed upon ourselves, it would not be undone; still it may be useful for the purpose of history, and of morality to trace the steps by which the acquisition was made." John M. Ludlow[3] recorded:

> "Dhuleep Singh was an infant; his minority was only to end in 1854. We were his declared protectors. On our last advance into his country, we had proclaimed (18th Nov. 1848) that we came to punish insurgents and to put down all armed opposition to constituted authority. 'We fulfilled that pledge by annexing his whole country within six months... In other words, we 'protected' our ward by taking his whole territory from him... But having once recognised and undertaken to protect Duleep Singh, it was a mockery to punish him for the faults of his subjects. As between us and him, in putting down insurrection, we were simply fulfilling our duty towards him. No such act on the part of his subjects could give us any title against him. Fancy, if you can, a widow lady with a house full of mutinous servants, who turn out and attack the police. The police knock them on the head, walk into the house and kindly volunteer to protect the mistress against any violence on their part. A quarrel again breaks out, the truncheons are again successful, and the inspector now politely informs the lady that her house and the estate on which it stands are no longer her own, but will be retained in fee simple by the

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police; that, on turning out, she will receive an annuity, equal to about one and six pence in the pound of her rental, and that she must hand over for the use of the Chief Commissioner her best diamond necklace. Is this an exaggerated version of our conduct towards that innocent boy Dhuleep Sing, now grown into a Christian gentleman?"

John Login, in a Memorandum published in 1860, for private circulation, said, "That the annexation of the Punjab... in-as-much as it involved the deposition of a young prince whom the British Government had solemnly engaged to protect in his position during his minority, and who had throughout evinced the utmost confidence in us (British), it was, to say the least, a harsh proceeding, and one which demanded from our Government towards the person whom our policy had despoiled, the most liberal and generous consideration." That 'liberal' and 'generous' consideration had been given to this virtual orphan boy Maharaja by his guardian, before and after the Annexation of his kingdom, partly seen as aforesaid and partly to be seen hereafter, as Dalhousie had summed up soon after landing at Calcutta as back as in January 1848, as Governor General, in his official minutes, that in exercise of a wise and sound policy, the British Government is bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territories or revenue, as may from time to time present themselves."[4]

The Annexation made, in about ten years after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, his foreboding turned out to be true and the Punjab, like the rest of India, came to be painted red on the political map of India. But who, amongst the British statesmen, at that time could imagine that, on account of wholesale curses of the Sikhs and the queen mother, the little Maharaja and rather the whole Indian Nation, within a century, their people would also be forced to wind up their Empire and 'Erase the red from the political maps of Asia and Africa.'

– Avtar Singh Gill

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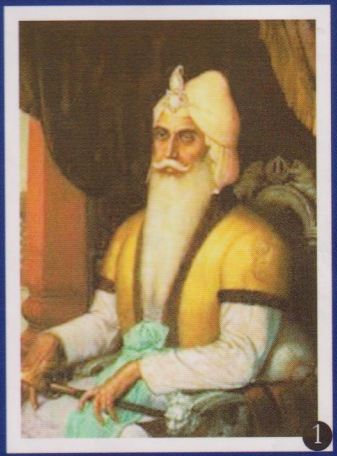
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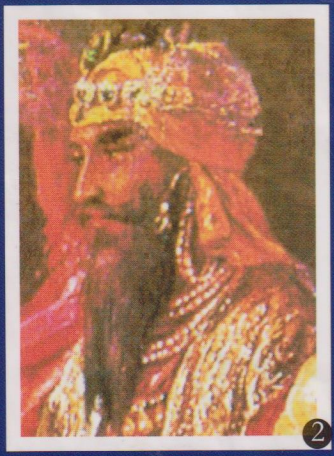
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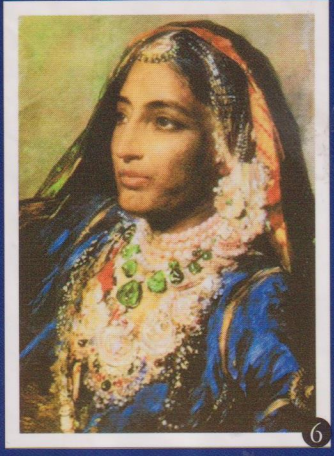
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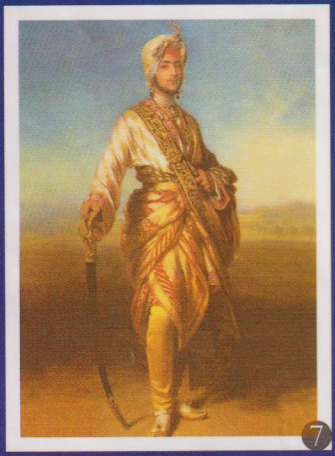
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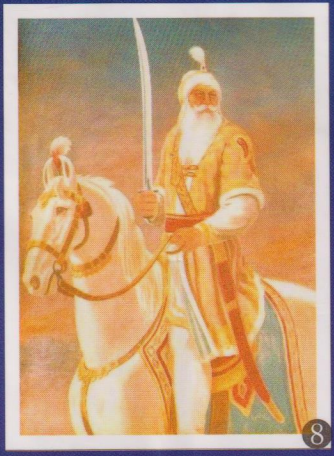
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